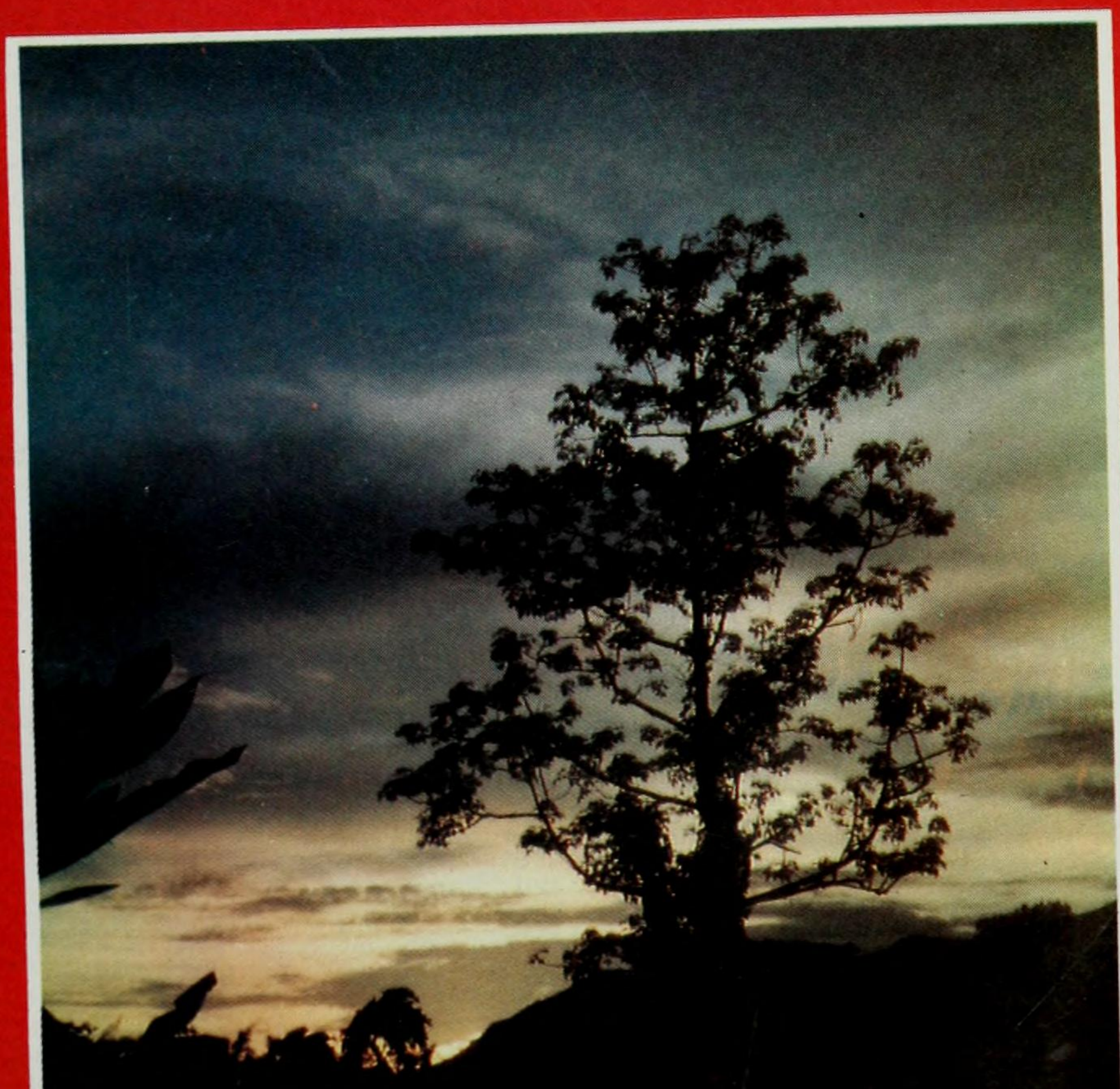
Meditation and other spiritual disciplines



SWAMI SWAHANANDA

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

MEDITATION AND OTHER SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

By

SWĀMI SWĀHĀNANDA

Distributed by
Vedanta Press
1946 Vedanta Pl. - Hollywood CA 90068
e-mail: info@vedanta.org

Advaita Ashrama
(Publication Department)
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Published by
Swami Mumukshananda
President, Advaita Ashrama
Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas
from its Publication Department, Calcutta

© *All Rights Reserved*
First Edition, February 1983
First Reprint, September 1994
Second Reprint, January 1997
2M8C

All rights in this book are reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever (except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews) without prior written permission from the publisher.

ISBN 81-85301-85-9

Printed in India at
Gipidi Box Co.
3B Chatu Babu Lane
Calcutta 700 014

CONTENTS

	Page
1. Types of Meditation	1
2. Japa or Repetition of Holy Words	8
3. Japa in Different Traditions	18
4. The Divine Name	22
5. Prayer	33
6. Ritual	43
7. Image-worship	56
8. Self-effort in Spiritual Life	68
9. Self-negation or Self-expansion?	76
10. Nine Means of Devotion	84
11. The Holy Mother and Simple Faith	91
12. Spiritual Discipline and Shankara	99
13. Spiritual Discipline and Rāmānuja	109
14. Spiritual Discipline and Madhva	122
15. Spiritual Discipline and Nimbārka	131
16. Spiritual Discipline and Vallabha	140
17. Spiritual Discipline and Chaitanya	150
18. Spiritual Discipline and Shrikantha	159
19. In the Scriptures	166

		Page
1.	Types of Meditation	1
2.	Japa or Repetition of Holy Words	8
3.	Japa in Different Traditions	18
4.	The Divine Name	32
5.	Prayer	39
6.	Ritual	43
7.	Image-worship	56
8.	Self-effort in Spiritual Life	68
9.	Self-negation or Self-expansion	76
10.	Nine Means of Devotion	84
11.	The Holy Mother and Simple Faith	91
12.	Spiritual Discipline and Shankara	99
13.	Spiritual Discipline and Rāmānuja	109
14.	Spiritual Discipline and Madhva	129
15.	Spiritual Discipline and Nimbarka	131
16.	Spiritual Discipline and Vallabha	140
17.	Spiritual Discipline and Chaitanya	150
18.	Spiritual Discipline and Shrikantha	159
19.	In the Scriptures	166

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We have pleasure in bringing out a collection of essays on spiritual disciplines according to the different Āchāryas of various philosophical persuasions along with articles on specific spiritual practices like meditation, japa, prayer, etc.

Swāmi Swāhānanda, at present Minister of the Vedanta Society of Southern California in Hollywood, was the editor of *The Vedānta Kesari*, a journal of the Order, during the years 1956–61. Many of the articles published in that journal are being presented now, slightly edited. Several other articles were published in different journals in later years.

We consider it a privilege to offer this book to the public. It is our earnest hope that this book will be warmly received by spiritual aspirants, who can derive much benefit by having a comparative knowledge of the various disciplines envisaged in the scriptures.

PUBLISHER

Advaita Ashrama
Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas
26 January 1983

I

TYPES OF MEDITATION

In the spiritual view of life, the purpose of our existence is to realize our spiritual nature, to realize God. The scriptures, saints, mystics and wise men of all religions support this. They have prescribed four major methods, called yogas, for achieving this realization. The four yogas correspond to four tendencies of the mind. Jnāna-yoga, the way of knowledge, directs the reasoning faculty of mind to distinguish the Ultimate Reality from transitory phenomena through philosophical analysis. Bhakti-yoga, the way of love, employs the power of strong feeling to direct the mind and personality to absorption in an Ideal. Karma-yoga, the way of action, harnesses man's driving compulsion to act, leading man to freedom from action through non-attachment and desirelessness. And, Rāja-yoga, the way of concentration and meditation, utilizes the mind's ability to reflect upon and affect itself to gain the power to direct the mind and fix its attention wherever desired. By making the mind one-pointed or functionless one can reach the Highest. Although meditation is the specialty of Rāja-yoga, it is practised in some form in every yoga. "The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation," said Swāmi Vivekānanda. "In meditation we divest ourselves of all material conditions and feel our divine nature."

Various scriptures stress the importance of meditation for spiritual realization. The Chāndogya Upanishad exhorts us: "Being tranquil, meditate."[1] The same Upanishad describes meditation as the key to success.[2]

Sri Krishna, in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gitā, describes the process of meditation in detail, instructing his disciple to become a man of meditation (yogi) because the yogi excels all.[3] The *Mahānirvāna Tantra* gives meditation a second place only to being absorbed in the Absolute, Brahman.[4] The Vedas and Purānas stress the efficacy of austerity in achieving success in any endeavour. All point to concentration, control of the mind as the highest austerity.[5] The Bhāgavata says the devotee becomes one with the Lord through one-pointed love.[6] And in the Bible, Jesus alluded to one-pointedness of mind when he said. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be filled with light."[7]

What is Meditation? Patanjali, the original teacher of yoga, said: "Meditation is uninterrupted thinking of one thought."[8] It is like pouring oil from one vessel to another. Swāmi Vivekānanda said: "Meditation is the focusing of the mind on some object. If the mind acquires concentration on one object, it can concentrate on any object whatsoever." Rāja-yoga describes two processes for achieving concentration. The first process is withdrawing the mind from sense objects. This "turning the mind around" is called pratyāhāra. The second process, called dhāranā, is focusing the mind on some object. The combined practice of withdrawing the mind and senses and focusing the attention leads gradually to dhyāna, the state of true meditation, when we are able to hold the mind on one chosen thought. Although the terms concentration and meditation are often used interchangeably, concentration means focusing the mind on any given object, and meditation means concentration on spiritual truth.

Yogis, practitioners of Rāja-yoga, describe five states of mind. The same person may experience these five

states at various times. In the *restless* or maddened state, the mind cannot be concentrated on anything. A person in this state of mind turns from one activity to another in an exhausting flurry of unconcentrated and unproductive activity. The five senses, like untamed horses, drag the hapless person in five different directions at once. At times the mind becomes *dull*, drowsy. The brain does not function fully when drowsy, and no concentration is possible in this state. When the mind is alert but *scattered*, one's attention drifts from one thing to another. With effort one can keep the scattered mind for a limited time in a circle of thought. Through the practice of sense-control (pratyāhāra) and focusing (dhāranā) one may attain a *one-pointed* state of mind. One-pointedness is meditation. Meditation leads the developed yogi to a waveless state of mind in which spiritual truth is spontaneously revealed. This is the goal of Rāja-yoga. "The real aim is to make the mind *functionless*," said Swāmiji, "but this cannot be done unless one becomes absorbed in some object."

Spiritual teachers from different religious traditions, philosophical orientations and cultures prescribe different meditation techniques. There are hundreds of specific meditations. Nevertheless, we can categorize meditation in the sense of concentrated thinking into six major types.

One general type of meditation is to witness the workings of the mind without trying to suppress or direct thoughts that arise. Vedānta philosophy asserts the true nature of the Self as beyond mind and thoughts. The Self is the Witness of all phenomena. Witnessing one's thoughts, one feels disidentified with the mind and identified with the Witness Self, the spiritual reality. As the spiritual aspirant practises this type of medita-

tion, he finds his wandering mind becoming calm, fit for deeper meditation. Sri Rāmakrishna used to say that the mind is like a naughty child; if you look at it intently, it feels shy, as it were, and begins to behave. Some also practise this type of meditation just to relax.

Another type of meditation is to think excellent thoughts. Swāmi Brahmānanda said: "The mind has to be made steady by two means: First, go to a quiet place, make the mind free from waves and meditate. Second, develop the mind by thinking excellent thoughts. The mind must be given food. That is how it remains calm. The food for the mind is meditation, japa and holy thinking." The idea is to occupy the mind with ennobling thoughts to the exclusion of negative or degrading thoughts. Some compare the mind to a dirty inkwell attached to a desk top. To clean the inkwell we need to pour in a large quantity of clean water. Pure and holy thoughts, reflection on the love and compassion of God, contemplating the inspiring lives of saints—all these act like currents of fresh, clean water to cleanse and purify the mind. A pure mind is a calm mind, fit for deep meditation.

Some teachers, especially Buddhist, recommend meditation on the transitoriness of all things. The phenomenal world, composed of the same gross and subtle elements as our bodies and minds, appears intensely real to us. Our minds naturally seek what we believe to be real. Attachment to the objects and people of this world obstructs our view of the changeless Reality. When we think deeply on the composite and impermanent nature of all things, our homes, our friends and family, even our own bodies and minds, our attachment to these things decreases. We begin to realize these things are not real and permanent as they appear at

first glance. Youth, beauty, wealth, prestige never last. Lincoln's advice to a young man applies equally in our days of success and failure: "Even this shall pass away." Because the disease of worldly attachment is deep-seated, drastic medicine may be needed to root it out. Therefore, some religious teachers instruct their students to practise meditation in a cremation ground or graveyard to impress vividly the transience of the world on an overly attached mind. The Holy Mother said: "Discriminate always between the real and the unreal. Whenever you find the mind drawn to any object, think of its transitoriness, and therefore try to draw the mind back to the thought of God."

Many sects of Hinduism and Buddhism practise meditation on God with form. They regard the various deities, Shiva, Durgā, Vishnu, and the Avatāras like Rāma, Krishna, Buddha, Rāmakrishna, as manifestations of the Supreme God. Meditation here means visualizing the luminous form of the Chosen Deity. Repetition of a Divine Name, or formula (mantra) greatly helps the mind to limit its wandering and achieve deeper concentration on the object of visualization. Swami Sivānanda said: "If you meditate on God with form, He Himself will reveal to you His real nature. . . . It is very difficult to meditate on the formless. . . . There is no question of inferiority or superiority in this; it is a question of temperament. Whatever appeals to one is best for him." If we love the object of meditation, our concentration deepens more easily. The yogi cultivates devotion to improve his meditation. The devotee practises meditation to deepen his love for God.

Some like to think of God as endowed with personal qualities such as love and kindness but without form. The formless personal God is the chief conception in

Christianity, Judaism and Islam and one of many conceptions in Hinduism and Buddhism. One may meditate on the formless personal God by feeling the living, conscious presence of the Lord in the heart or by visualizing a Being of boundless light, radiating peace, love, wisdom and joy.

The sixth type of meditation is meditation on the Absolute, Brahman, the formless, qualityless, impersonal Reality beyond all conceptions, the Ground of Being. Monistic Vedānta recommends this type of meditation. Swāmi Brahmānanda said: "God should be imagined as vast and infinite. To bring this idea of vastness within, one should look at the Himālayas or the ocean, or gaze at the sky." Of course, any representation of the infinite falls short of the Reality itself. Therefore, some employ more tangible symbols like the syllable, "Om", repeating the sacred word while visualizing its written form as a symbol of the all-pervading Self specially manifest in the heart.

The benefits of meditation depend in part on the motive one has in practising. The Jnānayogi in his discrimination between the Real and unreal, the Karmayogi in his performance of selfless work, the devotee in his worshipful adoration of the Divine and the Rājayogi in his quest to control the mind, all benefit from the power of concentration developed through meditation. As any power can be injurious if not used with caution for a good purpose, so also concentration without basic moral training may be harmful to oneself and others. Modern medical science has discovered the therapeutic value of meditation in treating hypertension, high blood pressure, insomnia and other by-products of high-pressure civilization. Spiritual teachers acknowledge the healing value of meditation. The Latin root of the

word meditation means "to heal". But spiritual seekers will always consider the health benefits as fringe benefits, subordinate to their primary Goal, which is Self or God realization.

Of all spiritual disciplines prescribed for the attainment of Self or God realization, meditation forms the core, the common, underlying thread. Whether one believes in God with or without form, as personal or impersonal, or whether or not one believes in God at all, one can practise some form of meditation conducive to success in one's particular approach. The science of meditation, Rāja-yoga, includes a comprehensive psychology both theoretical and practical designed to diagnose one's state of mind and prescribe an appropriate technique to make the mind fit for deeper states of concentration. Even from the point of view of maintaining one's physical and mental health in our modern world, one should consider practising meditation. Perhaps the root meaning, "to heal", most accurately describes the value of meditation; meditation can cure our ills be they physical, mental or spiritual.

NOTES

1. शान्त उपासीत । *Ch. U.* 3. 14. 1.
2. *Ch. U.* 7. 6.
3. तस्माद् योगी भवार्जुन । 6. 46.
4. उत्तमो ब्रह्मसद्भावो ध्यानभावस्तु मध्यमः । *M.T.* 14. 122.
5. मनसश्च ऐकाग्र्यम् परमम् तपः ।
6. यान्ति तन्मयताम् हरेः (10. 29. 15). माम् अनुस्मरतः चित्तम् मयि एव प्रविलीयते । *Bh.* 11. 14. 27.
7. Matthew, 6. 22.
8. प्रत्यय-एकतानता ध्यानम् । 3. 2.

2

JAPA OR REPETITION OF HOLY WORDS

Japa means repeating the Name of the Lord silently, sitting in a quiet place. If one continues the repetition with concentration and devotion, one is sure to be blessed with Divine visions ultimately—one is sure to have God-realization. Suppose a big log of wood is immersed in the Ganges with one end attached to a chain, which is fixed on the bank. Following the chain, link by link, you can gradually dive into the water and trace your way to it. In the same manner, if you become absorbed in the repetition of His holy Name, you will eventually realize Him.

—Sri Rāmakrishna

Japa is repetition of holy words or syllables,[1] either the Name of God or a holy text, according to prescribed rules.[2] Followers of the devotional schools, especially the Vaishnavas, feel that if real love of God comes and a taste for the sweetness of His Name develops, taking the Name once is enough. Sri Shankara also supports this idea, saying that for a qualified aspirant, hearing the mahāvākya, the four great non-dualistic mantras identifying the individual soul with Brahman, only once is enough, but for ordinary aspirants repetition is necessary.[3]

The repetition of the Divine Name has been accepted by almost all religions as an important discipline, and in Hinduism it has been greatly stressed. Patanjali, who was probably the first author of a systematic work

on spiritual training, recognizes repetition of a holy Name or text and thinking of its meaning as a valid method of sādhanā.[4] Even in the Advaitic system this practice is accepted as preparatory to pure contemplation. The relative importance of different spiritual disciplines in accordance with their capacity to take the mind Godward, is pointed out in a freely-translated saying thus:

> To be merged in Brahman is the best, meditation is middling, repetition of God's Name and prayer to Him are next, and last of all is external worship.[5]

The same idea has been presented in another saying in ascending order.

> First comes worship in symbols, then is reciting japa and stotra, higher still is mental worship, worship as "I am He" is the best of all.[6]

Various scriptures have extolled japa very much. In the *Shiva-dharma*, it has been said:

> One who is devoted to japa is the greatest among the twice-born; he achieves the result of innumerable sacrifices; the great fruit of all sacrifices can be had through japa.[7]

The *Yogachudāmani-upanishad* (87, 88) emphasizes the value of constant japa for self-purification and realization.[8] The *Mahābhārata* also says that the aspirant reaches the Highest through japa.[9] Formal sacrifices (yajnas) can be performed only by certain qualified people, but japa-yajna is for all. Angirasa says:

> Gifts given without being made public, knowledge acquired without vanity, and japa done in secrecy will be infinitely potent in their result.[10]

Japa has been prescribed as one of the six important duties for a twice-born, which are sandhyā (traditional spiritual practices performed three times a day), bath, japa, sacrificial offerings, worship of deities, and serving guests.[11] *Manu Samhitā* describes japa as an *ahuta* (not offered in fire) form of sacrifice.[12]

The earliest mention of the concept of japa can be found in the Vedas. Swādhyāya, the repetition of the Vedas, is an age-old practice. Statements such as "Repeat the Upanishad, repeat the sacred teaching,"[13] are often found in the scriptures. Among the Vedic sacred formulas, the Gāyatri has been prescribed for repetition from ancient times. The Vedic people had great faith in the efficacy of mantras. The Mimāmsakas considered mantras to be the embodiments of deities.[14] In fact, they accepted no deities other than the mantras at all. To them, Brahman is nothing but sound (shabda), and sound produces form. Thus, the name embodied in the mantra is more real than the form of the deity. Similarly, in Indian music particular notes or tunes are conceived of as having particular forms, and it has been claimed down the ages that many aspirants have had the vision of these deities. Forms are made up of nothing but fine vibrations, and vibrations are produced by sound only, so these ancient concepts are quite tenable.

From another point of view, a mantra gains spiritual potency through many years of being associated with holy men who have repeated it and attained realization through it.

The concept of the mantra is based on the psychological fact that much of our thinking depends on auditory symbols. Repetition of the mantra creates a chain of thought which infuses the mind with the thought of God, and this is the aim of all spiritual practices. For the same reason, chanting, singing, holy reading, and similar activities are spiritually efficacious. The Tāntrikas and Yogis say that a living being unconsciously repeats the *So'ham* mantra 21,600 times a day as he inhales and exhales.[15]

Japa should be performed a prescribed number of times. Angirasa says that japa repeated without keeping track of the number is fruitless.[16] The *Kulārnava Tantra* says that if the prescribed number of japa is not done, the japa does not bear fruit.[17] The *Vishvasāra Tantra* also supports this view.[18] Some devotees take a vow to perform a fixed number of japa daily or to repeat the Divine Name a crore (ten million) or a hundred crores of times in a fixed number of years. Though this practice places stress on the quantity, the main principle, love for God, is not forgotten. The Vaishnavas have a saying, a pun on two similar words, that along with the means (*laksha*—the number one-hundred thousand), the end (*lakshya*) should be remembered.

The Tantras especially put much stress on ritualistic japa. According to the *Kulārnava Tantra* the number of japa may be counted on the joints of the fingers or on a rosary. Various rules are prescribed regarding japa and the choice of the rosary. Rosaries of rudrāksha and tulasi beads are the most popular among Hindu sects.

Japa is of three graded types, each more efficacious than the preceding in geometrical progression. When japa is repeated audibly with proper pronunciation, it is called *vāchika*. If it is performed fixing the mind on

God and moving the tongue and the lips a little and is audible to oneself only, it is known as *upāmsu*. If it is repeated mentally while thinking about the meaning, it is called *mānasa*. Mānasa japa can be performed at any place and time.[19] Japa is to be performed neither very slowly nor rapidly but at an even rate, moving from one bead to another on the rosary. If the japa is done imperfectly, this can be rectified by various prescribed means or by more japa. The devotional schools have always tried to lessen the rigidity of these prescriptions about japa, placing emphasis instead on developing a devotional attitude with the help of japa. They claim that through japa alone even the external signs of devotion can be manifested.

Japa is the easiest sādhanā. The *Vira Tantra* says that japa alone can bring success.[20] It may be done with or without meditation. The *Nitya-pujā-paddhatih* describes the Tāntrika method of japa thus:

> Before japa meditate on the Goddess, at the end of meditation perform japa. A spiritual aspirant who practises japa and meditation together succeeds quickly. The Goddess is of the form of japa and Shiva of the form of dhyāna; success comes only with their union. So has been said in the *Kaulāvali* and *Gandharva-tantra*.[21]

The repetition of a mantra itself is recognized as efficacious; additional factors make it more so. Regularity in the practice of japa has been highly extolled and is very important. An oft-quoted Hindi couplet says that the highest results flow from regular practice.[22] A Sanskrit saying states that success in spiritual life unquestionably comes through japa.[23] Other helpful factors are a secluded place, steady posture, a suitable

seat, and proper articulation of the mantra. Alertness, of course, is essential. The Tāntrikas stress the ritualistic purification of the mantra in the beginning and offering the results of japa to the deity at the end. In japa of the Gāyatri mantra the system of invoking and visarjana is observed.

There is a variety of methods of doing japa. The Divine Name may be written repeatedly; this is called *likhita* japa. Continuous japa done without a break for a fixed period of time is called *akhanda* japa. Japa performed by several people together and repeated rhythmically has sometimes been prescribed. *Ajapā* japa is performed without moving the lips, repeating the Name with every flow of breath.

Of all the mantras, pranava, the syllable Om, has been greatly extolled. Sri Shankara has written: "What is the origin and end of all the Vedas? The syllable Om."[24] Patanjali considers pranava to be the symbol of God.[25]

In the Gitā, Sri Krishna identifies Himself with japa among all religious sacrifices.[26] Vāchika japa has been described as ten times more efficacious than formal sacrifice, upāmsu japa as a hundred times, and mental japa a thousand times more so.[27] Even for getting rid of physical ailments repetition of Divine Names has been prescribed, and in fact, elaborate directions are available regarding this.[28] *Tantrasārah* speaks of twelve practices which help in the fruition of japa. Some are austerities, such as sleeping on the ground, continence, taking a vow of silence, taking three ceremonial baths a day, and giving up activities that distract from the ideal. Others are observances, such as worship, giving gifts, supplication, singing to the deity, occasional worship of the deity, as well as faith in one's preceptor and in the

deity.[29] Different sects have evolved other observances, too many to enumerate, which make japa more efficacious. The *Kulārnava Tantra* considers *mauna*, keeping the vow of silence, itself as the best form of japa.[30] Again, the sage Brihaspati has enumerated observances that contribute to success in japa, restraint of the mind, purity, silence, reflecting on the meaning of the mantra, freedom from distractions, and absence of indifference toward the mantra.[31] The *Chāndogya Upanishad* says, "Reflecting in the mind, one should repeat the mantra attentively."[32] The *Mahānirvāna Tantra* prescribes knowledge of the meaning of the mantra and of the deity ensouled in it.[33]

Every Vedic mantra has a rishi who first intuited it, a particular metre in which it is composed, and a deity to whom it is addressed. In Tāntric mantras the most important element is the *vija*, a sacred syllable considered to be charged with spiritual potency, as also *shakti* or power and a *kilaka*, a pillar (inner syllables on which the mantra rests). All the letters of the alphabet are considered as different mātrikās, minor deities around the main deity.

The mantra is charged with a special potency, so much so that the Tāntrikas believe that when offerings are made to the deity with appropriate mantras, the deity accepts them immediately. The devotional schools, however, believe that even if the mantra is repeated without proper pronunciation or knowledge of its meaning, it will still be efficacious if the devotee is sincere and has intense devotion. Vālmiki is said to have attained realization by repeating "Marā", reversing the name of Rāma, because he was too sinful to repeat the Lord's name correctly. And afterwards that word itself became an efficacious mantra.

But best results can come through a combination of devotion and understanding. The *Chāndogya Upanishad* says about the efficacy of the repetition of Om:

> Both perform spiritual practices—he who knows and he who does not know. But knowledge and ignorance are different in their effects. Whatever is performed with knowledge, faith, and meditation, becomes spiritually effective.[34]

Patanjali stresses thinking of the meaning of the mantra,[35] that is, the deity or thought signified by the mantra, not the etymological meaning.

So japa, normally speaking, becomes spiritually effective if it is done with faith and with knowledge of its meaning. Yet, even if an aspirant lacks these, through japa, faith in the mantra and knowledge of its meaning will eventually come. The Name of God itself has great power and is capable of creating devotion even in a stony heart if it is repeated for some time. The Name becomes spiritually more potent if it is heard from a qualified preceptor. Having received the Name from a preceptor, repetition of the Name slowly brings the mind under control; the mind becomes increasingly concentrated and ultimately merges in the Lord. In this way success in spiritual life can come through japa alone, and thus it has been described as a yoga (a path to realization) by some writers.[36] It is the easiest of spiritual disciplines and may safely be practised by all spiritual aspirants.

NOTES

1. जपः स्यादक्षरावृत्तिः । *Tantrasāraḥ*, p. 66.
2. विधानेन मन्त्रोच्चारणम् । *Śabdakalpadrumaḥ.*
3. *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*, IV. 1. 1–2.
4. तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् । *Yogasūtra*, I. 28.
5. उत्तमो ब्रह्मसद्भावो ध्यानभावस्तु मध्यमः ।
   स्तुतिर्जपोऽधमो भावो बहिःपूजाऽधमाऽधमा ॥
   Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, XIV. 112.
6. प्रथमा प्रतिमापूजा जपस्तोत्रादि मध्यमा ।
   उत्तमा मानसीपूजा सोऽहंपूजोत्तमोत्तमा ॥
7. जपनिष्ठो द्विजश्रेष्ठोऽखिलयज्ञफलं लभेत् ।
   सर्वेषामेव यज्ञानां जायतेऽसौ महाफलः ॥ *Tantrasāraḥ*, p. 65.
8. See *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* by Swami Tyāgishānanda, p. 154.
9. जपमावर्तयन् नित्यं जपन् वै ब्रह्मचारिकम् ।
   तदर्थबुद्ध्या संयाति मनसा जापकः परम् ॥ *Ibid*, p. 155.
10. प्रच्छन्नानि च दानानि ज्ञानं च निरहङ्कृतम् ।
    जप्यानि च सुगुप्तानि तेषां फलमनन्तकम् ॥ *Ibid*, p. 157.
11. सन्ध्यास्नानं जपो होमो देवतानां च पूजनम् ।
    आतिथ्यं वैश्वदेवं च षट् कर्माणि दिने दिने ॥ Quoted in *Sanātana Dharma* (p. 168) by Sri Kamakoti Sankaracharya.
12. जपोऽहुतम् । III. 74.
13. उपनिषदमावर्तयेत्, उपनिषदमावर्तयेत् ।
14. मन्त्रात्मको देवः ।
15. *Nāthayoga* by Akshay Kumar Banerjee, p. 60.
16. असंख्यातं तु यज्जप्तं सर्वं तन्निष्फलं भवेत् । Quoted in *History of Dharmasastra* by P. V. Kane, II. i, p. 687.
17. न्यूनातिरिक्तकर्माणि न फलन्ति कदाचन । Quoted in *Tantrasāraḥ.*
18. जपसंख्या तु कर्तव्या नासंख्यातं जपेत् सुधीः ।
    असंख्याकारकस्यास्य सर्वं भवति निष्फलम् । *Ibid.*
19. न दोषो मानसे जाप्ये सर्वदेशेऽपि सर्वदा । *Vaiśampāyana Saṁhitā.*

20. कैवलं जपमात्रेण मन्त्राः सिध्यन्ति ।

21. जपस्यादौ शिवां ध्यायेत् ध्यानस्यान्ते पूनर्जपेत् ।
जपध्यानसमायुक्तः शीघ्रं सिद्धयति साधकः ॥
जपरूपा शिवाशक्तिर्ध्यानरूपः सदाशिवः ।
तयोर्योगाद्भवेत् सिद्धिर्नान्यथा खलु पार्वति ॥ p. 252.

22. जपत जपत बनि जाइ ।

23. जपात् सिद्धिर्जपात् सिद्धिर्जपात् सिद्धिर्न संशयः ।

24. कः सर्ववेदभूरथ चोम् । *Praśnottaramālā.*

25. तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः । *Yogasūtra*, I. 27.

26. यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि । *Gītā*, X. 25.

27. विधियज्ञाज्जपयज्ञो बिशिष्टो दशभिर्गुणैः ।
उपांशु स्याश्छतगुणः साहस्रो मानसः स्मृतः ॥ *Vahṇi-purāṇa.*

28. अच्युतानन्तगोविन्दनामोच्चारणभेषजात् ।
नश्यन्ति सकला रोगाः सत्यं सत्यं वदाम्यहम् ॥
Quoted in the Foreword to *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (Dhanvantari Publishers, Madras).

29. *Tantrasāraḥ*, p. 53.

30. मौन एव परो जपः ।
Quoted in *Śivaliṅgopāsanā* (p. 410) by Phadke.

31. मनः संहरणं शौचं मौनं मन्त्रार्थचिन्तनम् ।
अव्यग्रत्वमनिर्वेदो जपसंसिद्धिहेतवः ॥
Quoted in *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, p. 160.

32. मनसा ध्यायन् अप्रमत्त स्तुवीत । II. 22. 2.

33. III. 31.

34. I. 1. 10.

35. तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् । *Yogasūtra*, I. 28.

36. cf. *Japa-yoga* by Swami Sivānanda of Hrishikesha.

3

JAPA IN DIFFERENT TRADITIONS

"Japa means," said Sri Rāmakrishna, "repeating the Name of the Lord silently, sitting in a quiet place. If one continues the repetition with concentration and devotion, one is sure to be blessed with Divine visions ultimately—one is sure to have God-realization. Suppose a big log of wood is immersed in the Ganges with one end attached to a chain, which is fixed on the bank. Following the chain, link by link, you can gradually dive into the water and trace your way to it. In the same manner, if you become absorbed in the repetition of His holy Name, you will eventually realize Him."

The Holy Mother, Sāradā Devi, said: "As wind removes the cloud, so the Name of God destroys the cloud of worldliness."

The repetition of the Divine Name (or holy words) has been accepted by almost all Hindu sects as an important spiritual discipline. Patanjali recognizes japa along with thinking of its meaning as a valid method of spiritual discipline. In the Advaitic system it is accepted as preparatory to pure contemplation, so Gāyatri japa and reciting of the Upanishads and the Mahāvākyas are prescribed. The Tantras have stressed ritualistic japa with a seed mantra observing the prescribed rules. The Vaishnavas and others have stressed fervour along with japa.

The Name of God has its own potency. Any word, say our teachers, which has for years been used in the spiritual practice of holy men and women, is charged with special power. As much of our thinking depends on

auditory symbols, so repetition of a mantra helps the mind to be suffused with God. For the same reason, chanting, singing and holy reading are efficacious.

Japa is of three types: audible; silent repetition but with moving of lips; and mental. It is to be performed neither very slowly, nor rapidly, but evenly. Normally rudrāksha or tulasi beads are used in Hindu sects; different rosaries are used in other religions.

Japa is the easiest spiritual practice but should be performed regularly. The repetition of a Divine Name makes the mind gradually concentrated; deeper spiritual experiences follow. So the devotees believe that japa alone can bring spiritual illumination.

This spiritual practice of japa, or repeating over and over again God's Name, has been adopted in some form or other by all religions. In Hinduism and Buddhism, however, it is more predominant. Different sects have different mantras to repeat depending on tradition and language.

The Nichiren sect of Japanese Buddhism stresses especially the repetition of mantras. Nichiren declared that the study of the "Sad-dharma-pundarika-sutra" alone was the path of the spiritual aspirant and that the muttering of the sutra was the cause of liberation. The mendicants were to study the sutra and the householders were to repeat only the mantra—*Namu-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo* ("Glory to the sutra of the lotus of Truth"). The devotees of this sect assemble and chant aloud this sutra as Hindus do in kirtan. This somewhat resembles the Vaishnava's chanting of the Lord's name. The wide popularity of the Nichiren sect is due to the simplicity of its worship and to its declaration that japa alone leads to the highest goal.

In Tibetan Buddhism, japa plays a very important

part. The wheel of japa is well known, as also the mantra *Om manipadme hung*.

In Catholicism different prayers are regularly recited. Often the members of the church bring their rosaries and recite some simple formulas from the Bible. *Hail Mary* and *Our Father* . . . are thus repeated. Nowadays, in penances, instead of thinking of sin, people are asked, while in church, to repeat a prayer formula; the rosary must be turned a certain number of times. The long invocation of the names of the saints forms part of the preparation of the faithful for Easter. The Pope, while appearing on holy days on his famous Vatican balcony, invites the crowd to recite the "Angelus".

In the Russian Orthodox Church this system took root from the tenth century onwards. *Gospodji pomiloui* (Lord, have mercy on me) is the formula used over and over again by some followers of the Orthodox church. In a Russian book of the last century, *The Way Of The Pilgrim*, this has been elaborately described by a mendicant. It is the story of a Pilgrim's experiences during his travels: of his learning, practising and teaching to others the way of praying. He went to teachers to find out what it means to "pray without ceasing", as advocated in the Bible. A village teacher asked him to "pray more and pray more fervently. It is prayer which will reveal to you how it can be achieved unceasingly, but it will take some time." This is similar to the idea in the bhakti tradition of India that through the repetition of the Divine Name, all defects and obstacles will go and visions will follow. The Pilgrim received special encouragement from the words of the Bible, "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it to you." Through practice he found the deeper effects of the repetition of the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have

mercy on me." The silent repetition became synonymous with the beating of his own heart.

In Sufism the method has been applied from early days. "Dhikr" or recollecting God and repeating His Names is the most important religious practice. It has been given more importance than the five usual prayers. The name of Allah or Ali is to be repeated with intense concentration, as often as possible, often with breath control and other practices like concentrating on the nose and other organs. Recitation may be loud, or in a low voice, or mental. The devotee begins, says Ghazali, by repeating the Name. Then the tongue should cease moving and the name be repeated in the mind only. Finally, all forms should go and only the idea remain. At this point the devotee should lay himself open to God's mercy. The highest ecstasy is produced by "Dhikr". The ultimate stage is to be completely absorbed in God forgetting even the act of thinking of God.

Thus we see that the practice of repeating the name of God is universal. *Japāt Siddhih*, by japa comes success, says the well-known Sanskrit proverb. Swāmi Brahmānanda constantly told his students: "Japa, japa, japa! Even while you work, practise japa. Keep the name of the Lord spinning in the midst of all your activities. If you can do this, all the burning of the heart will be soothed."

4

THE DIVINE NAME

How to love God and surrender to Him whom we have never seen is a question that often arises. Replying to a similar query asked by a devotee, Swāmi Adbhutānanda, a direct disciple of Sri Rāmakrishna said:

> It does not matter if you do not know Him. You know His Name. Just take His Name, and you will progress spiritually. What do they do in an office? Without having seen or known the officer, one sends an application addressed to his name. Similarly send your application to God, and you will receive His grace.[1]

The answer was characteristic of Swāmi Adbhutānanda who was temperamentally a man of simplicity and faith. Though a simple answer, it satisfied the inquirer, for it carried the strength that is in the words of a man of realization. Moreover, his assertion is corroborated by the scriptural passages in which the Divine Name is described as identical with the Deity it signifies.[2] The Name of God is not merely a combination of letters; it is both the means and the goal of spiritual life. All words, but specially the syllable Om, have been identified with Brahman by the Vedas. The later scriptures glorify the Divine Names. Every system of religious discipline recognizes the efficacy of repetition of the Name and prescribes this practice to its followers. In Hinduism even the Advaita system of philosophy, which does not recognize the ultimate separate existence of a personal God, appreciates the value of the repeti-

tion of God's Names as a purifying act. In the theistic faiths, however, it is given a place of significant importance. Among the theistic systems, the Vaishnavite School of Bengal has laid the greatest stress on the Divine Name and has raised repetition of the Divine Name to the status of an independent sādhanā.

Sri Chaitanya, the founder of Bengal Vaishnavism, himself composed a few verses, known as the *Shikshāshtaka*, on the glory of the Divine Name. In the first verse he speaks about the nature of the Name and the efficacy of its repetition:

> The Name cleanses the mirror of the heart. It extinguishes the great forest fire of worldly existence. It is, as it were, the streaming of moonlight on the white lotus of final beatitude. It is the life and soul of its bride, Vidyā (Self-knowledge). It is the ocean of bliss. At every stage it imparts the sweetest nectar. It is, as it were, a soothing bath for all souls. Supreme glory be to the singing of the Lord's Name.

According to Sri Chaitanya, the Names of the Lord are various, and He has infused His omnipotent powers into them all. There are no limitations regarding the time for remembering His Names.[3] Describing the qualifications of a devotee, he says that the Lord's Name is to be always sung by one who is humbler than a blade of grass, who is more forbearing than a tree, and who, being himself devoid of conceit, bestows honours on others.[4] Ecstatic devotion comes through taking the Name of the Lord; the eyes overflow with tears of joy, words are choked in the throat, and all the hairs of the body stand erect with the thrill of joy.[5]

Later Vaishnavite saints and philosophers have dealt

with the topic of the Name off and on. All the scriptures, they opine, speak of the Lord:

> Everywhere—in the beginning, middle, and end of the Vedas, Rāmāyana, Purānas, and Mahābhārata—the Name of Hari is sung.[6]

In *Prema-vivarta*, a book written in verse on the glory of the Divine Name, Sri Jagadānanda Pandita distinguishes four different ways of taking the Lord's Name—uttering it, repeating it, chanting it, and singing it.[7] The highest sādhanā, he says, is singing the Divine Name,[8] for it involves the participation of many sense organs. Another devotee wrote a book on grammar titled *Harināmāmrita-vyākarana*, which uses names of Hari as grammatical examples. The *Bhakti-rasāmrita-sindhu* of Rupa Goswāmi describes sixty-four forms of devotion.[9] Of these, the five principal ones mentioned by the *Chaitanya-charitāmrita* are: association with the Lord's devotees, singing the Divine Name, hearing the scriptures, staying in a holy place, and serving the Deity with devotion.[10] Another saying reduces the important sādhanās to three—kindness to all beings, taste for the Divine Name, and service to devotees [11] Then it considers the chanting of the Divine Name to be the best form of devotion.[12] The glory of the Name was popularized in this tradition by Sri Chaitanya, Nityānanda, and Haridās. Nityānanda and Sri Chaitanya converted the two ruffian brothers, Jagāi and Mādhāi, through their infinite love and through nāma-sankirtana, singing the Lord's Name. Haridās, a follower of Chaitanya, changed the life of a prostitute with the strength of the Divine Name.

The *Bhāgavata*, the most authoritative scripture for the Vaishnavas, glorifies the Name and points out the

effect of its repetition. It says that repetition of the Divine Name is the highest duty of man in this world.[13] A man becomes fit to repeat it when he has contentment, faith, and firm devotion.[14] The Divine Name cleanses the mind of rajas and tamas[15] and instantaneously frees it from fear.[16] The greatest result, however, comes when the Name is chanted in the company of a good devotee or is heard from him.[17]

The *Bhāgavata* delineates nine methods of devotional disciplines and gives examples of great devotees who practised each of them. Parikshit specialized in hearing the scriptures, Suka in singing the glory of the Lord's Name, Prahlāda in remembering Lord Vishnu, Lakshmi in waiting upon Him, Prithu in offering worship, Akrura in obeisance, Hanumān in service, Arjuna in friendship, and Bāli in self-surrender.[18] Ambarisha combined all of these practices. According to the Chaitanya School, the results of all disciplines are achieved through the singing of the Names of God.[19] They say that in the Kaliyuga, the present age, Hari's Name has a special efficacy,[20] and though Sri Krishna has various Names, the most important of them is the one with thirty-two letters.[21] The glory of the Divine Name bears no comparison. As the *Ādipurāna* puts it:

> There is no knowledge like the Name, no vow like the Name, no meditation like the Name, no fruit like the Name.[22]

The Name is both the means and the end of spiritual life. To take God's Name and to see Him are the same thing. To the votary of the Divine Name, it is the Name that manifests itself as the form of the Lord, His divine qualities, and His divine play. The Form of the Lord is identical with His Name. Some devotees say that the

Name is even greater than the Form, as demonstrated in the lives of Rāma and Krishna. While Sri Rāma himself had to construct a bridge to cross the ocean, Hanumān leaped across by the strength of Rāma's Name. When Sri Krishna was put on one side of the scale and His Name written on a tulasi leaf was put on the other, he was found to be the lighter.

To be the most fruitful in its effect, God's Name must be repeated with fervent devotion. If the Name is thus repeated perfectly even once, it has the capacity to burn away all sins. The sage Vasishta had such faith in the Name that he disapproved of his son prescribing to a murderer the Name of Rāma thrice, for once was enough. But true taking of the Name must be distinguished from its semblance (nāmābhāsa), though even that has a great effect. A man may benefit even by taking the Divine Name unintentionally, as did Ajāmila while calling his son Nārāyana on his death bed, or in jesting, amidst disturbed thoughts, or without respect—though the last only if it is done not wilfully, but due to ignorance. The Name of God taken in any way is sure to bear fruit some time or other. Among devotees, aspirants and experts who take the Name of the Lord there are three grades. A spiritual aspirant who takes the Name intermittently is called a Vaishnava. One who takes it constantly is a greater Vaishnava. The greatest Vaishnava or Siddha is he who has ecstatic love for God. His absorption in the Divine Name is such that his presence itself makes others take the Lord's Name spontaneously.

According to Sri Chaitanya's system, the Divine Name must be repeated faultlessly in order to bear immediate fruit. This conception of nāmāparādha—faults committed in taking the Name, is peculiar to this

school. They have been listed as ten:[23] (1) disparaging genuine devotees, (2) regarding God as absolutely different from His names, form, qualitites, etc., or as equal to lesser gods, (3) disregarding the spiritual preceptor, (4) speaking too lightly or contemptuously of sacred scriptures, (5) considering the glory of the Divine Name mentioned in the scriptures as mere eulogy, (6) considering the Divine Name to be imaginary, (7) committing sins repeatedly and intentionally on the strength of the Divine Name, (8) regarding the repetition of the Divine Name as equal to other religious practices, (9) imparting it to unworthy persons, (10) lacking taste for the chanting or hearing of the Divine Name even after hearing of its excellences. These faults, however, can be rectified by chanting the Divine Name. As the *Padma-purāna* puts it:

> The sin of those who commit offence to the Divine Name is remedied by the Name alone, and it bears that fruit if taken constantly.[24]

We have discussed in detail the views of the Chaitanya School of Vaishnavism, which has made the Divine Name its cardinal doctrine. There are other sects which also place much emphasis on the Name. Several centuries before Sri Chaitanya, the sect known as Srivaishnavism was wide-spread in South India. The Ālwārs, the God-intoxicated saints of this tradition, had great regard for the Divine Name. Tirumāngāi Ālwār describes its efficacy in the following words:

> The Divine Name confers the status of noble lineage and wealth. It completely destroys all the sorrows of the devotees and bestows on them the highest heaven, the grace of the Lord, and life in His eternal abode. It provides strength and other

> things besides and renders care better than a mother.

To a devotee the Divine Name is "sweeter than sweetness", to use Kulasekhara Ālwār's expression. Tirumāngāi Ālwār described the Divine Name as "honey, milk, and ambrosia".

To a devotee the spiritual preceptor is the manifestation of the Godhead, and so his name is as sweet as God's Name. Madhurakavi Ālwār describes his love for the name of his teacher:

> The moment I utter the name of my lord of kuruhoor—Nammālwār—sweetness do I relish and nectar flows to my tongue.

Periālwār describes his hunger for the Name of the Lord thus:

> No hunger do I feel when there is lack of food, but the days on which I do not constantly recite the Name of the Lord are fasting days for me.

The beauty, sweetness, and efficacy of the Divine Name have also been praised by teachers of the Shaivite tradition. The great Nāyānār, Saint Tirujnāna Sambandar says:

> This Namah Shivāya, the Name of the Lord, the Truth among the four Vedas, leads to the path of beatitude those who recite it with a heart overflowing with devotion and eyes raining tears.

For an advanced soul, repetition of God's Name becomes automatic, as Saint Sundarar testifies:

> Even when I forget the Divine Name, my tongue goes on reciting Namah Shivāya.[25]

The glory of the Divine Name has been preached by the Shaivites of all schools. The greatness of the Names of God, like Rudra and Shiva have been testified to in the Vedas and other scriptures. An ancient verse points out the sanctity of Shiva's Name thus:

> The Yajur Veda is considered the chief of all the Vedas. Of all its parts, the Sri Rudra is at once the most central and the most important. In this again, the Panchākshara (Namah Shivāya) is most centrally placed. The two central syllables of these five are the name of the Lord. Hence the Name of Shiva can be considered the very soul of all mantras.[26]

The Shāktas, the worshippers of God as Mother, also have loving attachment and regard for the Names of the Deity. A Tāntric saint sings:

> If only I can pass away repeating Durgā's Name,
> How canst Thou then, O Blessed One,
> Withhold from me deliverance,
> Wretched though I may be?
> * * *
> For through the power of Thy sweet Name
> My wretched soul may still aspire
> Even to Brahmanhood.

One who repeats Mother's Name has no use for ritualistic worship. In this strain a devotee sings:

> O Shyāmā, my only hope is in Thy hallowed Name!
> What need have I of Koshā and Kushi (the articles of worship)?

And another mystic asks:

> Why should I go to Gangā or Gayā, to Kāshi,
> Kānchi, or Prabhās,
> So long as I can breathe my last with Kāli's Name
> on my lips?
> What need of rituals has a man, what need of
> devotions any more,
> If he repeats the Mother's Name at the three holy
> hours?[27]

It may seem confusing that each sect raises its Deity to the Highest. However, this does not pose an insurmountable contradiction. From the days of the Rigveda the followers of Hinduism have looked each upon his Chosen Deity as the Supreme and regarded other deities as the manifestations of that Deity. This does not imply disrespect toward the other deities, for there is the reminder again and again that they are all really identical. The oneness of Shiva and Vishnu, for example, has been clearly stated by Sri Shankarāchārya:

> Who is Lord Mahesha? The one Lord who is Shankara and Nārāyana.[28]

The Divine Name has been recommended as a path to God-realization by different disciplines. However, no matter which sect one follows, to be fruitful, the Name must be repeated with overflowing love for the Chosen Deity. First one must create a taste for taking the Name of the Lord; then the vision of God will be achieved. Sri Rāmakrishna once said to a devotee:

> Take His Name constantly. This will cleanse all sin, lust, anger and all desire for the pleasures of the body will vanish. . . .

Pray with a yearning heart that He may teach you to relish His Name. Undoubtedly He will grant your prayer. . . .

If a delirious patient loses all taste for food, you must despair of his life. But if he relishes food even slightly, you may hope for his recovery. So I say, "Find joy in His Name." Durgā, Krishna, Shiva—any Name will do. And if you daily feel a greater attraction for His Name and a greater joy in it, you need fear no more. The delirium must get cured, and His grace will surely descend on you.[29]

NOTES

1. *The Disciples of Ramakrishna* (1955), p. 187.
2. नामचिन्तामणिः कृष्णश्चैतन्यविग्रहः ।
   पूर्णः शुद्धो नित्यमुक्तोऽभिन्नत्वान्नामनामिनोः ॥
3. नाम्नामकारि बहुधा निजसर्वशक्तिस्तत्रार्पिता नियमितः स्मरणे न कालः ।
   Śikṣāṣṭaka, 2.
4. तृणादपि सुनीचेन तरोरपि सहिष्णुना ।
   अमानिना मानदेन कीर्तनीयः सदा हरिः ॥ *Ibid*, 3.
5. नयनं गलदश्रुधारया वदनं गद्गदरुद्धया गिरा ।
   पुलकैर्निचितं वपुः कदा तव नामग्रहणे भविष्यति ॥ *Ibid*, 6.
6. बेदे रामायणे चैव पुराणे भारते तथा ।
   आदावन्ते च मध्ये च हरिः सर्वत्र गीयते ॥
7. उच्चारण, जप, कीर्तन, संकीर्तन ।
8. परं विजयते श्रीकृष्णसंकीर्तनम् ।
9. A list of these is quoted in *The Divine Name* (p. 227) by Raghava Chaitanya Das.
10. Quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* by Sri Thakur Bhaktivinoda.
    cf. साधुसंग नामकीर्तन भागवतश्रवण ।
    मथुरावास श्रीमूर्तिर श्रद्धाय सेवन ॥ *Cāitanya-caritāmṛta.*

11. जीवे दया, नामे रुचि, वैष्णवसेवन ।
12. सर्वश्रेष्ठ भक्ति हय नामसंकीर्तन । *Ibid*, 3. 4. 71.
13. पुसां धर्मः परः स्मृतः । *Bhāgavata*, 6. 3. 22.
14. ततो भजेत मां प्रीतः श्रद्धालुर्दृढनिश्चयः । *Ibid*, 11. 20. 28.
15. न यत् पुनः कर्मसु सज्जते मनो रजस्तमोभ्यां कलिलं ततोऽन्यथा ।
Ibid, 6. 2. 46.
16. ततः सद्यो विमुच्येत यद्बिभेति स्वयं भयम् । *Ibid*, 1. 1. 14.
17. महत्तमान्तर्हृदयान्मुखच्युतः । *Ibid*, 4. 20. 24.
18. *Padmapurāṇa*, 53.
19. नवविधा भक्तिपूर्ण नाम हैते हय ।
Caitanya-caritāmṛta-mahākāvya, 15. 107.
20. हरेर्नामैव नामैव नामैव मम जीवनम् ।
कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ॥ *Bṛhannāradiya-purāṇa.*
21. हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे । *Brahmāṇda-purāṇa.*
हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे । *Agni-purāṇa.*
22. न नामसदृशं ज्ञानं न नामसदृशं व्रतम् ।
न नामसदृशं ध्यानं न नामसदृशं फलम् ॥ *Ādipurāṇa*, 465.
23. *Haribhaktivilāsa*, 2. 11. 521–4.
24. नामापराधयुक्तानां नामान्येव हरन्त्यघम् ।
अविश्रान्तप्रयुक्तानि तान्येवार्थकराणि च ॥
25. All the five quotations above are taken from *Tiru Arul Mozhi* (Introduction), Ramakrishna Math, Madras edition.
26. विद्यासु श्रुतिरुत्कृष्टा रुद्रैकादशिनी श्रुतौ ।
तं पंचाक्षरी तस्यां शिव इत्यक्षरद्वयम् ॥
Quoted in the *Sanātana Dharma* (p. 205) by Sri Shankarāchārya of Kāmakoti Pitha.
27. All the three songs above are quoted from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 11, 928, 71, respectively.
28. *Praśnottara-ratna-mālikā*, 65. 2.
29. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 122.

5

PRAYER

God is extremely attentive, my boys. He has heard every time you have prayed to Him. He will surely reveal Himself to you some day or other, at least at the time of death.

If you cannot settle whether God has form or not, then pray in this way: "O Lord, I cannot understand whether Thou art with form or without it. Whatever mayst Thou be, have mercy on me. Do reveal Thyself unto me."

—Sri Rāmakrishna

Prayer, said William James, is "intercourse with an Ideal Companion". It is talking directly to God. Great mystics are in a state of perpetual prayer. To them God is more real than the external world. Other men pray to God, accepting His existence on faith. In moments of emotional upheaval due to success or failure or apprehension, something is stirred up in man's heart; faith in a greater being or power is born, and prayer follows. Prayer is thus the deepest impulse of the soul of man. It is not dependent on calculated reasoning. Reasoning is an afterthought to prayer.

It has been questioned whether there is any necessity for prayer, arguing that if there is no God, there is no use of praying to Him; and even if He is there, can He change the laws of nature or of karma? It has been contended that with the advancement of science and the growth of secularization of life since the industrial revolution, man has lost his unquestioning faith in an

Almighty God and in the necessity of praying to Him. Certainly it is difficult to provide proof in favour of the existence of God which is immediately verifiable and tangible to grosser minds. But several points may be noted which will amply show the efficacy of prayer.

The most empirical argument in favour of prayer is that it relieves the mind of tension, which is the natural concomitant of a life of hurry and worry. It neutralizes mental repressions and purifies the subconscious. It releases an extra amount of hope and energy and thus enables a man to face life squarely. Life is not all sweetness, enjoyment, and success; it is drudgery, pain, and failure too. And more than this suffering itself, worry and apprehension about it eat into the vitals of man's life. With all the opportunities for enjoyment provided by advancing technology, man still lives in anxiety. Prayer frees man from anxiety and sustains him in moments of suffering. Prayer frees man from tension by unburdening his mind, putting faith in God's power to alleviate suffering, or by seeing one's problems in a larger perspective. Such psychological benefits are quite evident.

Universality is a test of truth, and there are thousands of people throughout the world and down the ages who have received help from prayer. Mystics and saints have achieved illumination through it and have strongly advocated it to others. This in itself a proof of prayer's validity.

Prayer also helps us keep up our spirits in an otherwise hopeless situation. In many cases prayer is answered objectively; inevitably there is a subjective response in the devotee. Prayer has a great corrective power too, and it has the capacity of transforming a man's character. Much trouble in the world is created

by tyrannous people who do not face their consciences. If they did so, many of their baser tendencies would be overcome.

Prayer presupposes faith. In fact, prayer is an exercise of faith. It might have originated in "a basic awe", as Rudolph Otto puts it. But as we see it, the mental make-up of man is such that his heart eternally longs for a sanctuary, for satisfaction, for an abiding home. As a child has conviction about his mother's competence, a forlorn soul has conviction about the omnipotence of God and longs for His help. A man who prays usually has faith in a religion, belief in an omnipotent power, a sense of his own utter helplessness, and a yearning for a stable refuge. Shraddhā, a quality much extolled in holy books, is intense faith in God and in oneself. It is a common experience that men who have moved the world or a particular society had tremendous faith. Even the most ordinary man gains much strength when he is imbued with strong faith. God is the source of energy, and whoever attunes his mind to Him has direct access to that source. He becomes endowed with indomitable enthusiasm and optimism, and when another man comes in contact with him, he in turn absorbs these qualities. That is how men have become saints, fishermen have become apostles, and ordinary men have become heroes.

But is there a way for a man who does not have that sort of all-absorbing faith? Yes, there is. Sri Rāmakrishna says:

> One may attribute the various forms and aspects of God that are current in society to imagination, and may have no faith in them. Yet God will shower His grace on a person if he believes in a

> Divine Power that creates and directs the world, and prays with a distressed heart, "O God, I do not know Thy real nature. Deign to reveal Thyself to me as Thou really art."
>
> (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 146)

Every science proceeds by taking certain hypotheses to be tested and then accepted or rejected. So if our faith is not great enough, we may take spiritual truths on trust at the outset and make our own experiment. An immediate result is sure to follow. More far-reaching results, faith and realization, however, may take some time. The result depends upon the spiritual evolution of the votary. If prayer is practised with sincerity, fervour, and regularity, a man will surely get ample proof of its efficacy. And this will encourage him to further efforts and deeper faith.

The function of prayer is to create a mental condition which frees the mind from the deadweight of worldly life, helping it to soar high to discover subtle and lofty truths. The mental climate created by prayer is comparable to that generated by a song, a poem, or a painting.

Sincerity is an essential condition for proper prayer. About the efficacy of prayer, Sri Rāmakrishna said:

> When the mind and speech unite in earnestly asking for a thing, that prayer is answered. Of no avail are the prayers of that man who says with his mouth, "These are all Thine, O Lord," and at the same time thinks in his heart that all of them are his.
>
> (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 147)

Prayer is a companion to humility. The primary burden of our embodied state is the sense of ego. Secular

education and the individualistic outlook of modern society have tended to increase this egotism. And yet, in the heart of our hearts we long to surrender and take shelter under somebody. We may be too egotistical or find it difficult to take refuge in a human being. But recognition of a Higher Power who is full of grace and sympathy can bring out our humility and surrender. Then we can unburden ourselves to Him, the Lord of our heart. This unburdening has the tremendous psychological benefit of freeing us from the pressures of life. The practice of confession had its origin in this great psychological principle and also in the belief that God or great souls can help man overcome the obstacles to spiritual progress.

Adversity is a great teacher. In fact, the lessons of life we often learn through suffering. In the Gitā Sri Krishna recognizes dejection as a form of yoga, a path to union with the Godhead. We may forget the dreary side of life when we are young, healthy, and fortunate. At that time our minds are often closed to the higher principles as well. But when we have seen both sides of life, we may begin to ask if there is nothing beyond this apparent world. Then we pray. Only then can our hearts open to the transcendental truths. Suffering is a door leading to God, and prayer unlocks the door.

Man accepts faith by nature and reason by cultivation. That is, faith, and with it prayer, comes naturally to man, whereas reason must be cultivated. People in primitive cultures have used prayer, and every religion preaches it. Even rationalistic Buddhism had to bend before it. But prayer is not in conflict with reason. Reason can help prayer by clarifying its objectives and directing it beyond lesser aims.

The question has been asked, as we told before,

whether God can cancel our fate or change the course of the world. Our thinking in this scientific age is rooted in the idea that there are fundamental, unchangeable laws by which the universe functions. The Hindu theory of karma, based on the inevitable link between cause and effect, also more or less supports it. Is prayer capable of changing these laws? This brings us to the age-old tussle between grace and law.

According to Hinduism, the law of cause and effect is a valid law, but God is conceived as the bestower of the fruits of action. If He so desires He may compress the results of action into a shorter span of time, just as a whole life may be shown in a few hours in a film. The devotional schools of Hinduism regard God as the Master of all situations and, while grace sits in His heart, His hand goes out to render justice.

According to the Christian conception, "The act of prayer, whether with words or without, is the act of putting ourselves more completely into the power of God's working so that some good may be attained or some evil escaped." Communicating our wants and begging favour are the necessary devices by which the act of prayer is performed. Prayer is worship and petition. It is meaningless if petitions are not answered. But how are they answered? They are answered "by some wider and deeper inter-responsiveness of people to one another which God accomplishes in answer to that predisposition of personality which is the act of prayer." Prayer transforms our wants in such a way that they can be fulfilled and it creates responsiveness in other persons to fulfil them.

Swāmi Vivekānanda explained that it is our "own will that answers prayer", for the Soul has infinite powers. Regarding the efficacy of prayer, he said:

By prayer one's subtle powers are easily roused, and if consciously done, all desires may be fulfilled by it; but done unconsciously, one perhaps in ten is fulfilled. Such prayer, however, is selfish and should therefore be discarded.

(*C.W.* vii, p. 392)

There are some minds too rationalistic and too tired of hearing of the weakness of man to pray. Vedānta provides for such people a rational, philosophical explanation of the efficacy of prayer. According to Vedānta, prayer's efficacy lies in helping us forget the embodied condition and become attuned to a Higher Reality. Prayer thus purifies the mind as do other spiritual disciplines. When prayer is methodical, regular and fervent, it disciplines the mind and prepares it for higher realization. But even occasional or untrained prayer has some effect on the mind, attuning it to higher ideas at least partially and for the time being. As the mind is freed from selfish ideas, nobler thoughts rush in to fill up the vacuum.

Vedānta is neither a "historical" nor a "revealed" religion as are Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Vedānta is based on the essential nature of man. According to Vedānta, truth is a matter of personal experience, a fact of internal revelation which can be achieved by everybody. So Vedānta values prayer for its subjective efficacy. It does not advocate prayer arising from weakness or from calculating gratitude, but it emphasizes prayer as a method of cleansing the mind, of suppressing egotism, and of searching our hidden desires in the mind which must be renounced. A follower of Vedānta uses prayer as a step to knowledge, for though he may have the required faith in the teachings of Vedānta and an

intellectual comprehension of them, he may not yet have realized the truth. Religion is the realization of truth, and prayer helps in that realization.

Prayer by its very nature is private—a soul speaking to the Soul. But people of similar religious attitudes naturally gather and join in group prayer. Here all the hearts join together in supplication to God. Group prayer is not an aggregate but a symphony.

Three types of prayer are mentioned in various scriptures of the world. Christianity in particular has developed prayer as a discipline and made it its most important method of spiritual practice. Petitionary prayer is most common with ordinary people, beset with difficulties and tossed by a-hundred-and-one desires, who pray for relief from troubles and to be given some advantage. The Gitā recognizes those who turn to God in distress as one type of devotee. And such devotees do get a response to their prayers, either through miracles or in the ordinary course of events. The subjective result is in the generation of hope, confidence, and enthusiasm, which are themselves no mean achievement. Intercessory prayer, prayer not for oneself but for others, is more unselfish in motive. Advanced souls have the power to redress the sufferings of others through prayer or through their strong, purified will. The third and highest type of prayer is contemplation. The devotee surrenders his self-interest and takes the attitude of "Thy will be done." Meditation is thus coupled with adoration and consecration. The devotee who desires nothing in life but God finds it natural to pray like this. When this attitude matures, the devotee fully surrenders himself to God and becomes His instrument. Prayer then becomes continuous. His life itself becomes a continuous prayer. Whatever he does

becomes an offering to God. Though this is the purest form of prayer, the previous two are not without merit. They improve one's conduct and character and purify the mind so that one can eventually practise the highest form of prayer. Thus prayer has rightly been described as a form of yoga, a path to realization.

Complete resignation to God is ideal prayer. Faith is recognition of a Higher Power and Its loving kindness; a prayer is resignation to that Higher Power and utter abandonment to Its will. The Higher Power is intensely personal to a devotee. The more his conviction, the greater is the fervour and the more complete is the surrender. The devotee then lets go of his ego completely and says, "Not my will but Thy will be done", "Not I but Thou." In this total giving up of the self there is no petitioning, no bargaining; it is one prolonged extinction of self-interest. In the Vaishnava scriptures, differences of attitude even among great devotees have been pointed out. While some want to enjoy God, others want a relationship with Him of mutual enjoyment, or to serve God and be enjoyed by Him. Kubjā, Chandrā, and Rādhā are examples of these attitudes.

The Vedic Shānti mantras are a form of prayer. "Let my mind turn to the good", or "Let my will not go against Thy will", is the burden of many of them. They are repeated to drive home to the mind the basic ideas. By regular meditation on them the mind is soaked with those thoughts. Prayer thus clarifies the ideas, strengthens the will, concentrates the mind, and purifies it. Whatever brings these results may be considered prayer. Thus, seeking God or making the higher truths one's own is itself true prayer. Repeating the Divine Name, a spiritual discipline in its own right, is also a form of prayer, usually of a higher type, when the need for

petitioning has been transcended. A devotee prays aloud to God in the beginning, but as his mind is concentrated, he becomes silent. It is through this primarily mental process that an aspirant gains control over his mind and senses. Then the truth of the Higher Self becomes apparent to him. He finds God dwelling in his heart and he longs to see Him. His mind is divided, as it were, into two halves—the praying self and the Self to which he prays. The intense yearning of the lower self to realize the higher is prayer. This is upāsanā, or approaching God.

For ordinary aspirants, prayer must be coupled with other effort. The theory of karma presupposes a particular mental make-up and latent impression in each individual. But it also leaves scope, or rather it is also a call, for individual striving. In the beginning, prayer and effort must be combined. A student, if he is to succeed in his life, must harmonize both study and prayer.

Prayer is not wishful thinking. It calls up the latent powers in us and gives us the strength to overcome lethargy and other obstacles. It does this in a very unobtrusive way; for the very springs of lethargy, jealousy, egotism, etc., are gradually cleansed and all resistance to spiritual life is silently conquered. Prayer thus purifies the mind and helps full assimilation of ideals. When daily I pray, I forget my enmity with my foe, and I love him. What to speak of resolving all misunderstanding between friends and relatives? Prayer thus enhances familial and social harmony. By effecting personal integrity, it preserves social solidarity. By invoking the best in man, it works for a higher culture, a nobler civilization. Let us have recourse to prayer for purifying our minds, cleansing our social relations, improving the national cohesion, cementing international harmony, and attaining the highest goal of life.

6

RITUAL

In every religion there are three parts; philosophy, mythology and ritual. Philosophy of course is the essence of every religion; mythology explains and illustrates it by means of the more or less legendary lives of great men, stories and fables of wonderful things and so on; ritual gives to that philosophy a still more concrete form, so that every one may grasp it—ritual is, in fact, concretized philosophy.

The greatest men I have seen in my life, the most wonderfully developed in spirituality, have all come through the discipline of these rituals.

—Swāmi Vivekānanda

What It Is

Culture has been variously defined. It may be broadly described as "the totality of human invention and achievement". Custom, tradition, and institutions are its several features. When there is proper integration of these, an enduring culture ensues. Religious rituals form an important aspect of culture and combine all these three. If we are to know a culture, we must know its rites and ceremonies.

The term "ritualism" should properly mean "interest in or study of ceremonies", but instead it is generally used to mean "attachment to the accompanied ceremonies". In Christian England it was used in a hostile sense. But much of what was once considered "ritualistic" is now customary in Protestant as well as in Anglican Churches, though principles involved continue to be disputed.

Ritual is "a prescribed form of activity determined by considerations of tradition and symbolism". It satisfies our imagination which is a human quality evident in abundant measure in children. Sir John Woodroffe, a great advocate of Tāntric ritual, observes: "Ritual is the art of religion. The rituals are designed to secure realization of Unity with Her. Shākta-Sādhanā, which term includes what is called in English 'ritual', is based on sound psychological principles."

Rituals are the body of religion. Rituals are concrete; spiritual ideas are abstract. Rituals are the refuge for spiritual ideas. Subtle ideas are comprehended easily by very few people. Most people require concrete forms in which those finer ideas are embodied in order to grasp them. Though abstract ideas are appealing to an intellectual, it is the demand of human nature to have a body of rituals to translate those ideas in action. Thus, rituals are the spiritual ideas in practice.

Ritual has often been an important element in the lives of great saints, who have followed ritualistic practices. They practise certain rituals in the beginning of their spiritual life with great faith and devotion. Then as they progress, they outgrow the necessity of following the outer forms. Still they often continue to observe them. This is because of their desire to transmit the ideal tangibly to others. But they see clearly through the forms. That is, their conception of the form changes and the abstract ideal behind the form becomes real to them. This is very clearly seen in the case of Sri Rāmakrishna. He began his life as a priest in a Kāli temple. Gradually he proceeded deeper into the mystery of the nature of his chosen Deity. And we find him ending with realization of the identity of Kāli and

Brahman. "He who is called Brahman, I call Kāli." This is the ideal function of rituals and forms, that through them the spiritual aspirant ascends to the highest reaches of thought.

Origin

The origin of ritual reaches back as far as that of religion, and thus, like the origins of religion, it is shrouded in mystery. There is no religion without ritual. This shows there must be some organic relationship between the two. Ritual is a limb of religion. While the metaphysical aspect of religion is represented by speculations and doctrines, the practical aspect is represented by ritual. Ritual fulfils psychological and social needs. It helps to establish a living contact, however one-sided it may appear to onlookers, between the worshipper and worshipped. Carlyle in his *Sartor Resartus* has described the practical aspect of religion as "Church-clothes", with which, he says, men have "invested the Divine idea of the world with a sensible and practically active Body, so that it might dwell among them as a living and life-giving Word."

How do we get rituals? Inner spiritual content is put into doctrinal formulations, and they in their turn are symbolized in rituals. Their functions are different; doctrines are concerned with belief, rituals with action. Doctrines come first, rituals follow them. When we study a new religious movement, we see this to be true. In primitive societies there were no definite doctrines. That was probably due to weakness of abstract thinking, they say. But, even then there was a body of beliefs, instinctively felt, though not intellectually codified or assessed. In any society, priests come in afterwards when the ritual becomes complicated and requires specialists,

and the specialists in their turn make it more and more complex. Ritualism then becomes an institution and tends to become conservative and fights any innovation or new spiritual experience. But with the march of thought, with the change of doctrines, rituals are gradually but eventually changed. Sometimes old forms are retained and given new meanings.

Community was all-important to people. So ritual also was more communal than individual. An individualistic concept of righteousness became a common idea later. When a new prophet comes, the rituals of the priestly religion of that community are changed, repaired, or re-organized. It is like a man's changing according to time and mood. But the inner spiritual content of the rituals remains the same. It has often been seen that ritual and society interact upon each other. Some assert that "outward religion originates by society", others reply "society becomes possible by religion."

Ritual and Knowledge

Rituals in India were of two types—Vedic and Āgamic. But at present we do not find them existing separately. The daily Sandhyā-vandanā is "a composite form consisting of Vedic mantras, Yogic measures, and Āgama rituals". Most of the rites are slowly being lost, excepting probably the ones connected with birth, marriage, and death.

In the Vedic age there was provision for both individual and collective benefit from ritual. Sacrifice was the pivot of Vedic society and it served both subjective and objective functions. The rites had to be performed with great precision to produce their proper effects. So gradually the class of priests as specialists was formed,

and this in turn allowed the rituals to become more and more complex. But this was not without benefits too, for Vedic sacrifice has given birth to the science of geometry and measurement. Slowly Vedic ritualism became a predominant view of life. The Upanishadic Jnānakānda or path of knowledge arose as a protest against the Karmakānda or path of action and ritual of Purva-Mimāmsā. The conflict between Purva-Mimāmsā and Uttara-Mimāmsā about the supremacy of ritual or knowledge has been carried down through the ages. However, the controversy lost its virulence after the advent of Shankara. He discussed logically the claims of both, questioned the hitherto prevailing supremacy and pointed out the relative value of each from the Vedāntic standpoint. In the Introduction to his Commentary on the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, Shankara discussed this controversy. We need not go into the details of his arguments, but we may note the main points.

Shankara says that "attainment of the desirable and avoidance of the undesirable are the aim of every created being." Joys in life can be attained by people according to means known to them. But about the next life, no one knows. In this realm, the Veda alone is the guide. Veda enjoins Karma or work, meaning here ritualistic work. "Production, attainment, and purification are the functions of work." In the opinion of Shankara, work does not lead to liberation, but it purifies the mind; and in the purified mind, knowledge of Brahman dawns. So Shankara recognizes ritual or work as an indirect method to realization.

By contrast, to a philosopher of ritual, knowledge is secondary. However, he considers knowledge to mean knowledge of rituals, not knowledge of Brahman. The

Upanishads praise rites performed with knowledge. Vedic Karma had three meanings: (a) work in general, (b) adrishta karma, or the result of action—an invisible something that clings to the soul as a consequence of work done in its embodied condition, and (c) rituals. There are different types of ritualistic Karma—nishiddha, prāyashchitta, kāmya, naimittika, and nitya. Nishiddha or prohibited action is not Karma at all, while prāyashchitta or propitiatory action is only a penance. Kāmya karma, the rites performed with a *desire* for special fruits, bind a soul. It is the naimittika and nitya karmas, occasional and regular rites, which, if done with an attitude of nonattachment, free a man from sin. Nitya Karma purifies the mind by mantras, forms, disciplines, and regularity of practice, and only in a purified mind is knowledge possible. One cannot give up karma till one is firmly established in knowledge. Otherwise one will be lost between the two hazards of inaction and incapacity for high thinking.

The attitude of Vedānta towards Vedic ritualism is that of liberalism towards conservatism, of the prophet towards the priest. There is an age-old struggle between the priests and prophets. It has been aptly said that while the priest deals with the past and the present, the prophet deals with the present and the future. "The priest of today is a man of yesterday, as invariably as the prophet of today is a man of tomorrow." Though the prophet rejects, in a way, the old rituals, he also produces a new body of rituals. The function of ritual is to familiarize for us the journey of ascent to the Divine. It is like the steady ballast. But as time passes, vested interests grow along with privileges. Then the time for change comes. And generally the protest is sounded from among the privileged group; nay, it is its

function too. As Swāmi Vivekānanda puts it: "It is the duty of every aristocracy to dig its own grave."

Functions

Ritual has two types of functions, objective and subjective. Ritual binds the members of a society together. It facilitates contact between people, helping them to know one another. Many of our social contacts take place at rites of birth, initiation, marriage, or death, etc. It is also an opportunity for children to be exposed to religious situations. Like language, ritual comes early in the life of a child. Another important function of ritual is to continue the cultural traditions. It binds together different generations by continuing the traditions. This is very essential, for it frees life from violent breaks and the resultant emotional strain. The provision of observing different rituals in different places of pilgrimage by people staying in far off places, makes for the experience and unity of a body of followers. As among the primitives, so among the civilized, rituals "serve as bonds of social unity and symbolic reminders of common ideals". So rituals are of great value for fostering and increasing the sense of the ancient origins, dignity, and mysteriousness. Over and above these social and historical functions, rituals convey the subtler philosophical and spiritual ideas. Rituals have been described by Woodroffe as the "expression in action of the philosophical principles". That is its most important function. Rituals are the vehicles for ideas. Ceremonies are symbolized faith. They bring religious experience before the votary by presenting beliefs in a tangible way. In this lies the origin of all art, as for instance the liturgical plays in Christianity that gave birth to modern drama.

In the subjective field ritual has tremendous contributions to make. Every human emotion requires an outlet, and ritual provides a form of expression for religious emotion. It helps to build up the emotional life. By thinking of God while doing the ritualistic worship, a devotee slowly imbibes a spiritual mood and thus he is divinized. Much has been spoken about the satisfaction of our sense of beauty. Most agnostic people appreciate ritual either for its artistic beauty or for its antiquity. As has been pointed out, most of the arts, such as drama, song, sculpture, and painting, developed first around religious ceremonies and then declared their independence in course of time. Undergoing the rites involving fasting, austerity, etc. has a great moral value. It disciplines the body and mind, inculcates self-control, and helps one to gain mastery of the spirit over the flesh, which is the object of every religious discipline. Ritual not only fulfils these external functions; it has access into the inner court of mystic experience also. The highest experiences attained through ritual by mystics like Sri Rāmakrishna show that it not only prepares the ground for spiritual life, creates the atmosphere, and suggests the mood, but also predisposes the mind and makes it fit for realization. In a purified mind, knowledge automatically dawns. In the social context, ritual protects a society like a fort against all forces from without. Even mechanical observance of ritualism can preserve a society from disintegration, as is evident from the Indian experience with caste.

Limitations

Ritual is a means to individual spiritual growth and consolidation of society. And yet while we praise ritual,

we should not overlook its limitations. History shows that every Incarnation of God changes the old rituals and promulgates new ones. It is like changing the bottles and retaining the original contents. That shows that forms and ceremonies, rites and rituals must change. In fact, we find that with spiritual growth, the evolved souls go deeper and deeper and become indifferent to externals. This is, of course, not the indifference of an agnostic who is not sure of anything, but the result of a deeper understanding of the inner content.

Of course, it must be admitted that popular religion often turns into mechanical and soulless ceremonies. And surely these should be decried, but not by throwing the baby out with the bathwater—rather, with the idea of grasping the real spirit behind all rites. That is, we must not turn static, but dynamically grow in our ideas, and ascend to higher and finer reaches of thought steadily. That is the main purpose of all rituals.

For popular religion innovation is taboo, but all resistance melts before real experience. The lives of great souls are a living testimony to this. Of course, it may be resisted not only through ignorance but because of vested interests also. Great souls come and simplify and rationalize the rituals. They turn out the Pharisees and bring in the devotees.

Charges Answered

There are several arguments in favour of ritualism. Rituals are the commands of God or of the inspired saints and prophets and hence must be followed by the faithful. Moreover, it is the experience of centuries that the more ritualistic institutions have shown the greater stability and such religions have produced a greater

number of saints. Often it is found that those who give up old forms end up by taking up new but less significant ones. Rituals acquire more and more compelling force with the passage of time. The prophetic exhortations of non-ritualistic reforms have little effect unless they appeal to sentiments firmly established by centuries of ritualistic practice.

In one sense, all activities of life will come under ritualism. Our manner of dressing, eating, receiving a guest, all these take the forms of rituals, for they are only the expressions of our thoughts. So while Westerners shake hands, Indians may fold their palms on their forehead, yet both convey the same feeling of warmth in greeting. From this example, two things are clear. First, rituals are symbols, external forms meant to convey some internal idea. Secondly, rituals depend on tradition. Rituals are not created overnight. They soak into the group subconscious through generations of practice. Outsiders without previous schooling will find it difficult to enter into the proper mental climate, for the appropriate mood will not be suggested to their minds. It is precisely because of this that modern city life or industrial civilization, bereft of all traditional training, is the hotbed of antagonism for all rituals. But love for rituals is inherent in human nature. So though the traditional and religious rituals are questioned, ridiculed, or rejected, new or borrowed rituals are introduced into the society according to the training and experience of the majority of society or its leaders. So it is often seen that instead of traditional procession with the Deity of the temple, we like processions with the political leaders; and though we do not like to decorate the Deity with jewels, we like to do so to ourselves.

A pertinent doubt may arise. Different religions stressing different rituals will keep the followers estranged in spite of contact in other fields. So is it not better to evolve a uniformity of rituals for all people? The difficulty is, they will not have the authority of the realization of a prophet and hence will lose all strength and validity. It is true that difference of rites and ceremonies will tend to create difference. But if we have a knowledge of comparative religions and know the method of harmonization practised by Vedānta in bringing together different faiths in Hinduism, it will be easy for us to discover the inner unity and common purpose of all different rituals. There is the common experience of the mystics behind all established disciplines. Again, disciplines can be grouped into the familiar Indian conception of the yogas—Jnāna, Bhakti, and Karma—paths of union predominantly through head, heart, and hand, the concentration being the soul of all. The moral foundations are common to all religions. The conception of the Ishta, of one God manifesting as different chosen Deities, will help men to appreciate other Deities and ways of approach to them. Of course, it must be admitted that some rituals revolting to one's neighbours must be modified. That is a common method in religious traditions. When killing of animals became unpopular, Tantras and other systems prescribed different substitutes in the place of animals. This type of transformation is quite possible and relevant. Only it should be gradual and natural.

Nowadays rituals are in disrepute. It is partially because of the overall secularization of modern life and education. Secondly, there are people who are indifferent to rituals because of their complexity and diversity, though they may not be indifferent to spiritual

ideas as such. But the difficulty they experience in missing all spiritual suggestiveness of forms and rituals does not give them much scope to be in the religious mood. There is a third type of people; they go through the rituals mechanically. They are too gross in mind or have lost the capacity to enter into the subtlety of things. This is of course bad from the standpoint of religion, but this keeps up the habit. As a result, when their mood eventually changes or there is growth of the mind, the rituals reveal subtler truths to them. People without any habit, any previous schooling, will find it difficult to breathe in the proper atmosphere or to retain the mind in the higher sphere.

Ritual and Spirituality

One charge against ritual is that its thought often tends to crowd out the thought of God and the needs and ideals which were the very origins of the observance. This is a valid charge. We must be careful about it. The best type of people are those who can catch the spirit of the rituals, can enter into the mood the rituals are meant to create, and at the same time transcend ritual as mere habit.

There is much confusion about what exactly constitutes the spiritual life, but it will be fairly correct to say that to keep the mind in a special mood so that it can see the Divine, feel the Divine, and think of the Divine, is spirituality. Rituals help a devotee to practise this type of spirituality. Religion has several aspects. Knowledge of the ultimate verities, of course, is the apex of spiritual life. As a precondition, faith in them is generated in progressing souls. This faith is not of the inferior type of make-belief. It is something deeper and more convincing than ordinary sense-experience. To

have that firm faith, it is necessary, says every religion, to practise and acquire some moral virtues. Every religion speaks of morality which is considered to be of real use by people who do not much believe in religious life. To bring in these moral excellences, to make them one's own, it is necessary to practise some external forms and rituals which will inculcate a measure of self-control and detachment from grosser ideas. These four, viz. ritual, morality, faith, and knowledge, are the several limbs of religious life. There may be cases mentioned in traditional literature where people as it were have skipped over one or two of these steps. But even in these cases they are implied. It is the experience of generations that in the vast majority of cases all the four limbs are necessary to keep the organism going and growing. There are some who think that in this age when people lack unquestioning faith, rituals should be substituted by morality. But the experience of religions down the ages is that morality is no substitute for rituals; even pure knowledge cannot do the job for the common man. The husk is as essential as the rice for new birth and further growth.

7

IMAGE-WORSHIP

> If a worshipper is convinced that the images of the Deity in the shape of various Gods and Goddesses are verily divine, he reaches God by their worship. But if he holds them to be nothing better than mud and straw and clay, to him the worship of such images does no good.
>
> When one sees God, one realizes that everything, images and all, is a manifestation of the Spirit. To him the image is not made of clay but the Spirit.
>
> —Sri Rāmakrishna

The worship of God in images is as old as religion and has been practised by people of all ages and races. Some religions have incorporated it more than others in their practices. Some religions have disapproved of it, notably some of the Semitic religions. Christianity and Islam in particular have raised the cudgel against it. While the cudgel of Islam of old days was often crude and violent, that of Christianity generally took the shape of vigorous propaganda; there was coercion only where Christianity had the support of the political rulers. This propaganda was so virulent and one-pointed that modern westernized society had inherited from it the doubt that image-worship has any validity. Worse yet, there is even the feeling, which is unthinking and credulous, that such worship is bad. In spite of repeated efforts by the supporters of image-worship to demonstrate the strength of their arguments, this idea continues. Vedānta discusses this problem from the

standpoint of the highest realization and gives an explanation which is satisfying rationally as well as emotionally.

Christian missionaries have often identified image-worship with idolatry. They do not see the refinement of feeling, the subtlety of ideas, and the depth of emotion that characterize image-worship, probably because they are too dogmatic in their outlook. When you read their arguments, you wonder that the same thousand-year-old examples and methods of reasoning are still being presented, as if they never came in touch with finer ideas regarding worship. But strangely, all religious groups practise one form or another of image-worship. Islam and Protestantism are the least idolatrous, it is said. But what are the Cabbah, the mosque, the crescent, and the Koran; or the cross and the Bible? When we come to Catholicism and other religious faiths, we find an abundance of images. Images, it is clear, are prevalent throughout the world, so there is no reason for any group to look down upon another on that score.

What exactly is idolatry? Is image-worship idolatry? Idolatry has been described as:

> the worship of a physical object, usually an artifact, as god. It may refer to the worship of alien divinities, or to the adoration of what is seen and tangible as opposed to the invisible spiritual being, or to the exclusive veneration of any human creation instead of the one true creator god.[1]

The history of Christianity is full of controversy about the attitude toward images. Ultimately it was decreed that images should be venerated but not adored. It is generally seen that images of saints often serve the purposes of instruction and inspiration, but they may or

may not be worshipped. Images of ancestors may be revered, or used as fetishes, or if the ancestors have attained divinity, worshipped as idols. On the borderline between image and idol are the statues of Jain Masters and of Confucius who were revered as great teachers rather than as gods.

It is said that the nature-deities of early religions were regarded as tangible and visible realities and hence needed no symbolic representation. Then as the religious concepts evolved and the gods were identified less with the physical phenomena and more with spirit, their presence began to be represented with tangible symbols. The religions of Babylonia and Egypt treat their symbols or images as real embodiments of gods. The religions of Israel used images in the beginning but rejected them later. And though Christianity officially condemns idolatry, it has many images. Mohammed destroyed the idols at Mecca, and Islam forbids their use. Zoroastrianism never represented the deity in human form; the chief object of worship is fire. This rapid survey shows that image-worship is present to one degree or another in every religion, but there are differences regarding its meaning. Worship may be called idolatry when the worshipper considers the physical object or representation itself as God and is not conscious that through it he really worships the Godhead. But if we study the conception of worship in different religions, possibly barring the primitive religions, it will be clear that all votaries are worshipping God through an image. Hence there is no idolatry as such with the advent of the higher religions, but there is the worship of God through symbols. As Carlyle says in his *Heroes And Hero-worship*:

> Idol is Eidolon, a thing seen, a symbol. It is not God, but a symbol of God; and perhaps one may question whether any most benighted mortal ever took it for more than a mere symbol.

Swāmi Vivekānanda in his *Bhakti-Yoga* has discussed the various methods of worship. There are two types of objects that are worshipped, pratikas, which are substitutes for God, and Pratimās, which are images of Him. Worship of God through a pratika is "joining the mind with devotion to that which is not Brahman, taking it to be Brahman".

> The word pratika means going towards, and worshipping a pratika is worshipping something as a substitute which is, in some one or more respects, like the Brahman more and more, but is not the Brahman.

There are various pratikas. The mind itself can be an internal pratika, while the ākāsha is an external one. The forms of the forefathers and deities also may be included in the category of pratika. But a pratika is not God Himself. And because worship of God alone can give devotion and liberation, a pratika must be regarded as a substitute for God; only then can the full benefit of worship of God be had. Any worship presupposes the concretization or limitation of the Godhead. If the allegiance of the soul is given to things other than God, it is idolatry; if it is given to Brahman and Brahman alone, even if through the idealization of a substitute for Brahman, then it is fully beneficial and leads the worshipper to liberation. Only we must remember that "we may worship a picture as God, but not

God as the picture", even though the picture or image of a saint or a deity may bring holy thoughts and help one progress in spiritual life. Looked at from this standpoint, worship through images is not idolatry, as God alone is worshipped through them.

To make the abstract concrete is human nature. In fact, man himself is a manifestation, a limitation of the Absolute. So whatever we do is concretized, even our thinking. As Swāmiji says:

> We are all idolaters, and idolatry is good, because it is in the nature of man. Who can go beyond it? Only the perfect man, the God-man. The rest are all idolaters. So long as we see this universe before us, with its forms and shapes, we are all idolaters. This is a gigantic symbol we are worshipping. He who says he is the body is a born idolater. We are spirit, spirit that has no form or shape, spirit that is infinite, and not matter. Therefore, anyone who cannot grasp the abstract, who cannot think of himself as he is, except in and through matter, as the body, is an idolater. And yet how people fight among themselves, calling one another idolaters! In other words, each says, his idol is right, and the others' are wrong.

If idolatry is so all-pervasive, why deride it? Why not use it to the best advantage, by worshipping these images which remind us immediately of the Godhead? If attachment to friends and relatives is not condemned, why should sentiment toward an image of God be condemned? "Is it not better to have a personal attachment to an image of Christ or Buddha than to an ordinary man or woman?"

So we see that image-worship is an efficacious thing

when we understand its true spirit. But we must also remember that image-worship which is insincere and is practised merely out of habit without the support of faith is fit to be condemned, for it does not help in spiritual progress, nor even in making the mind prone to holy thinking. It is a fact that for many people, image-worship has become simply a convention; though they still get some benefit from it, real spiritual progress cannot be achieved without understanding the true significance of all substitutes and images.

How were the images discovered? It was not mere fetish, for even the primitive people had a vague feeling of some force behind the physical. The less refined idea of course became gradually more and more refined till the higher religions evolved. But that is the method of all manifested things. A passage from gross to refined, from concrete to less concrete can be discovered anywhere. Our writing in the beginning was mere pictorial representations, and speech, gestures.

It is not clear when the so-called primitive stages were outgrown in India. The Vedic Aryans had no physical images; they worshipped the Fire and the Sun. The majesty they saw in nature, in the mountains, rivers, etc., created an allegiance to different gods having philosophical significance. The principle of underlying unity was discovered in the Rig-Vedic Age amidst an apparently confusing multiplicity and heterogeneity of deities.

Studies have been made of the different devotional schools. Of these, the Bhāgavatas worshipped the Sun and later Vaishnavism evolved the five distinct ways of worshipping Vishnu. According to the *Yatindra-mata-dipikā* (Ch. 9), a Vaishnavaite text, Ishwara abides in a fivefold form as Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryāmin,

and Arcāvatāra. Para is the infinite God, Nārāyana; and Vyuha is the highest Brahman abiding in specific forms. Vibhava is the descent of Ishwara among beings by means of forms similar to that genus. The Avatāras and many modes of them are included in this. Antaryāmin is the Indwelling God. The Arcāvatāra is Ishwara descending in a non-material body into the images installed in temples and shrines.

There are different divisions in different systems. The devotional schools generally accept that images are actual physical manifestations of the divine, while the subtle aspects of God are non-physical. The relation of the subtle to the gross is like the relation of the mind to the senses, of the memory of pleasure to the senses of perception. To think is to condition, and as there is variety in thinking, there is variety in divine forms also. But the ultimate aim of all aspirants is nevertheless the innermost principle, the Ātman. At the moment of realization, all externals are left behind, and so ultimately variety in forms of the divine does not matter. But to have spiritual validity, the divine forms must be *seen* by great spiritual souls, who invest the particular form with great power, as it were.

Historically speaking, in India image-worship dates back at least as far as the time of Buddha. Sri P. V. Kane in his *History Of Dharmasāstra* (Vol. 2, Part 2) discusses the origin of images and concludes that "long before Pānini there had arisen professional men who made their livelihood by attending on images and that temples of deities must have existed even in the 4th or 5th century B.C." (p. 710). He rejects, on the grounds of anachronism, the view that the making of images was copied from the Buddhists or from foreign tribes such as the Scythians or the Huns. He also does

not accept the view that the worship of images was adopted from the Shudras and the Drāvidian tribes and absorbed in the Brāhmanical cult, for the attitude of disdain toward the professional Brāhmin priest was not because he *was* a Shudra, but because he was neglecting the duties of a Brāhmin. Sri Kane's conclusion is that the practice of image-worship grew naturally and spontaneously. He says:

> When Vedic sacrifices became less and less prevalent owing to various causes (particularly because of the doctrine of ahimsā, the various upāsanās and the philosophy of the Absolute set forth in the Upanishads), there arose the cult of the worship of images. Originally, it was not so universal or elaborate as it became in medieval and modern times. (p. 712)

This view is supported also by J. J. Modi in his article on idol or image worship. After much discussion he concludes:

> But it seems that idol-worship, though it did not exist in very old Vedic times, originated in the country itself. Foreign influence may have affected the forms etc. of the idols from the point of view of art, but it did not originate idol-worship.
>
> In India, from very ancient times, there was the tendency to idealism. Later on, the idealistic conceptions began to be developed into iconographic works. Art became the co-adjutor of religion. Temples, which were the best specimens of art, became in themselves educative sources. Music, as an art, began to educate by sound. Temples, images, paintings, as works of art, began to edu-

cate by sight. Idols began to be an expression of ideals.

(*Sir Āshutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volumes*, Vol. III, p. 445)

Image-worship has its roots in the ancient scriptures, and the influence of the Vedic yajna or sacrifice can also be seen in formal worship, the pujā of today. In fact, pujā was considered to be a yajna, for like a yajna, it also consists of oblations to the deity accompanied by a holy formula meant for a deity. Regarding the objects used for worship, all types of things were prescribed in the old books. There is a saying that "Hari is to be worshipped in water, in fire, in the heart, in the sun, on the altar, in Brāhmins, and in images."[2] The materials used for making images are also varied. The *Bhāgavata* (11.27.12) prescribes precious stones, gold, silver, copper, brass, iron, wood, or clay to be used for this purpose. Lead and bronze are also accepted by other authorities. The *Brihatsamhitā* says all aspirants must offer formal worship to their Chosen Ideals according to the procedure prescribed by their particular sect.[3]

The ultimate reality, Brahman, has two aspects, without form and with form. Form is essential for meditation. As the *Vishnu Samhitā* (29.55) says, "Without a form how can God be meditated upon?" Image-worship presupposes that God has forms which the images represent. As a saying goes, "Brahman has imposed forms upon Himself for the benefit of the spiritual aspirants."[4] The Sanskrit word for image is *vigraha* which means "to grasp firmly"; hence vigraha is really not an "image", as it is translated, but a "symbolic representation" which helps the mind to grasp an abstract idea.[5] Images have been visualized by

realized souls in deep ecstatic moods. The Upanishads state that Brahman pervades all that exists, and hence all images are manifestations of Brahman in a general way, as all things in the universe are; yet they are His manifestations in a special way, which is more concentrated and concrete. Regarding worship it must be admitted that modes of worship vary according to men's conceptions of God, and so a devotee may accept the image as the actual manifestation of God, whereas an advaitin may accept it as a substitute for God. But the advaitins also recognize that there is difference in manifestation. Sri Shankara, the great advaita philosopher, wrote hymns to the glories of the different deities worshipped on the sub-continent of India in his day. He also instituted an integrated worship of the five main deities that were popular then.

Three kinds of upāsanā have been recognized in the ancient scriptures. Swarupa worship is worship of the formless performed within one's own self. Sampad worship is worship through symbols such as the sun etc., where some special resemblance exists between the perceptible symbol and the imperceptible Brahman; while pratikas and the anthropomorphic images are worshipped in the third method. Innumerable symbols and substitutes for God have been accepted by man throughout the ages. The tenth chapter of the *Gitā* enumerates many forms and aspects of the Supreme Lord, each being the most sacred thing within a category of objects. The last two upāsanās are done with vigrahas that have form (sarupa). The Arupa Vigrahas are without form. The formless worship is done in the Self, while sarupa worship is done in the Shālagrāma, Shiva-linga, Shrichakra, etc.

Along with the more apparent spiritual benefits,

image-worship brings certain social benefits also. Shrines in the home help children to imbibe the religious spirit, and elders can go there for solace. Temples, which are really the houses of images, have a unifying effect socially, for they bring the devotees together. When a man goes to the temple, he feels himself to be before God. The image thus links man and God, helping man to be gradually suffused with the Lord. All love, all cares, all emotions can be directed toward God through the image. This doubting age has missed a great psychological aid. Down the ages, serving the image of one's chosen Deity has provided a direction to the energies of people who otherwise would feel forlorn. There are even now hundreds of men and women who do not feel lonely, even though they are separated from family, children, friends and jobs because of their intense love for an image of God which they consider as real as their near and dear ones. And all this, we must remember, is quite in line with the ultimate objective of life. It might be possible to somehow spend one's time pursuing varieties of pleasures, but joy, calmness, poise, and hope can flow only from an attitude of spiritual conviction, which in turn can come only through faith in God. Moreover, for believers it would be a sheer waste of energy and time to run after sense-pleasures. Worship satisfies a man emotionally, but it is an activity of a higher order. It makes him godly. Social virtues like politeness, sympathy, and selflessness, are the by-products of his mental peace and inner joy. So we are not to give up image-worship, but take that means to develop a deep love for God, who will ultimately reveal Himself as pure spirit. That is the goal of all spiritual practices. Everyone recognizes the value of a spiritual outlook, but how to imbibe that

spirit is the problem. We believe image-worship is a dynamic and potent method.

NOTES

1. *An Encyclopedia of Religion* by Vergilius Ferm, p. 356.
2. Quoted by P. V. Kane, p. 715.
3. यं देवमुपाश्रिताः स्वविधिना तैस्तस्य कार्या क्रिया। Kane, p. 722.
4. साधकानां हितार्थाय ब्रह्मणो रुपकल्पना।
5. Cf. *Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, p. 454.

8

SELF-EFFORT IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

Achievement of a goal requires effort, whatever that goal may be. The progress that has been made in the fields of science and technology, communication and commerce, or even arts and letters is the result of tremendous efforts by mankind for many centuries. In the field of religious life, too, effort is necessary. What exactly is the place of self-effort in spiritual progress? It is often believed that the theories of karma and grace are opposed to the idea of self-effort. The theory that circumstances are predetermined also seems to conflict with the idea of self-effort. And free will, which is essential for self-effort, is recognized as having limitations. Therefore, the ideas regarding these principles must be clarified first in order to appreciate the role of self-exertion in spiritual life.

The doctrine of divine grace, which is held supreme by the foliowers of the devotional path, says that self-surrender to God is the only thing necessary for spiritual realization. It paves the way for the coming of divine mercy. Furthermore, as even the smallest detail of the functioning of the world takes place through God's will, how can there be provision for any endeavour on our part? Divine grace is an important principle in religious literature. But it is also pointed out that certain qualities of character are necessary before a man is ready to receive divine grace. The devotee's whole-souled surrender itself purifies his character and develops these qualities in him. Even when he is only a novice in spiritual life, he tries to direct his whole mind to God. What is the eventual result? He forgets even his body.

His whole centre of life shifts from himself to God. Selfishness, egotism, greed, and other impediments are cast off unknowingly, and higher qualities take possession of him. These sāttvic qualities are mentioned in the *Gitā*:

> Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga; alms-giving, control of the senses, performing sacrifices, reading of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness;
>
> Non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, lack of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, steadiness;
>
> Boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride; these belong to one born to achieve a divine state, O descendant of Bharata. (XVI. 1–3)

Sri Rāmakrishna has described beautifully how these virtues are automatically conferred on a devotee simply through his intense love of the divine:

> What are the indications of God's advent into the human heart? As the glow of dawn heralds the rising sun, so unselfishness, purity and righteousness announce the advent of the Lord.
>
> Before visiting a servant's house to receive his hospitality, a king sends there the necessary articles like seats, ornaments and food from his own stores so that the servant may be enabled to receive his master properly and show him due honour. In the same manner the Lord sends love, reverence and faith into the yearning hearts of the devotees before He makes His advent. (*Sayings* 937, 938)

These qualities of character are the same ones devel-

oped consciously and directly through spiritual disciplines and austerities by other aspirants following other paths. So we see that though there may not be conscious self-effort on the part of the devotee, except for his whole-souled love for God, actually he undergoes the same purification of character as is enjoined on any spiritual aspirant. Yet he does not consider the effort involved in such discipline to be his own; instead he is impelled to do it by a higher force.

The law of karma is sometimes regarded as conflicting with the idea of self-effort. The law of karma is no doubt operative. But what exactly does it mean? As we sow so we reap; every cause must produce a proportionate effect. So the results of all our actions must be experienced by us in this life or a later one. Every action leaves a samskāra, an impression in our mind, which creates a tendency for the action to be repeated in future. Viewed thus, the doctrine of karma provides a great incentive for self-effort, for every new action creates a new tendency. Religious actions will produce religious tendencies, thus making the mind more and more fit for realization. Furthermore, though a particular samskāra may be a compelling influence for some time, the experience of pain and pleasure may weaken its influence, and by the exercising of one's will, better samskāras can be made predominant.

Sometimes we may feel helpless in the face of our bad samskāras. But the great teachers have encouraged us, saying that by thinking of the divine, our bonds are loosened and the mind slowly becomes stronger and better able to make further efforts toward God. The greatest merit of the theory of karma is that no one can be regarded as beyond hope. Everyone will reach the highest goal, even if it requires a succession of lives. And

no effort goes in vain. Even a little effort becomes the starting point for great good. Hence we see that the theory of karma can be a great incentive for self-effort. Moreover, God, the giver of the fruits of karma according to the devotional schools, is not only a great judge but also, as the devotional schools maintain, the repository of mercy. "If an aspirant goes one step towards the Divine Mother," says Sri Rāmakrishna, "She comes a hundred steps towards him." The evil effects of karma can be minimized or even cancelled by Him. Again, from the advaitic standpoint, for a man of realization, even if his karma is not mitigated, he does not actually suffer the fruits of his karma, because he does not identify himself with his body and mind. This was Āchārya Shankara's line of argument in discussing prārabdha karma, karma which has already become operative and must be experienced even by a realized soul. The unoperative karmas of a realized soul have all been burnt by the fire of wisdom and need not be experienced.

Self-effort implies work. Doesn't work bind a man? As it is said in the *Gitā*, it is man's nature to work. Yet since every action leads to a new action, it seems there can be no end to the chain of work and its effect and hence to the cycle of birth and death. On the other hand, it has been pointed out in the *Gitā* that consecrated action does not bind a man; in fact, it releases him from the thraldom of karma.

> The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of yajna (sacrifice); do thou, therefore, O son of Kunti, perform action for yajna alone, devoid of attachment. (III. 9)

A man who is unattached feels that the work is being

done by the senses, by the gunas, or by prakriti. To cease identifying oneself as the agent of action and separating the real "I" from the acting "I" is the suppression of the ego. If we do not think of ourselves as doers nor anticipate the results of our actions, the main causes of our bondage are removed.

> Do thou perform obligatory action; for action is superior to inaction; and even the bare maintenance of thy body would not be possible if thou art inactive. (III. 8)
>
> Therefore, always perform actions which are obligatory, without attachment; by performing action without attachment, one attains to the highest. (III. 19)
>
> Renouncing all actions to Me, with mind centred on the Self, getting rid of hope and selfishness, fight—free from mental fever. (III. 30)

The theory of predetermination is akin to the devotional attitude that everything is done through God's will. It is also similar to the idea of karma-phala, that every action leaves an impression which will bear fruit in the future. However the theory of karma posits that one's karma can be changed by one's present actions, whereas the theory of predetermination does not allow that possibility. Whether one accepts the theory that everything is done through God's will or that everything is predetermined by some other force, scope for self-effort is still left. As we cannot know what is ordained for the future, we can only endeavour to lead our lives in accordance with the teachings of the scriptures and the dictates of conscience. And this effort in its turn guides us towards the goal.

There is a great deal of discussion in religious litera-

ture about free will, particularly posing the question: if everything is preordained, where is the scope for free will? In any given circumstance there are alternatives between which a person is free to choose, but there is no free will in the ultimate sense. Sri Rāmakrishna has beautifully pointed out both the range and the limitations of free will with the analogy of a cow that is tied to a post with a long rope; it can either remain near the post or roam as far as the rope allows. Similarly, a man is free to act, but only within the radius determined by his physical and mental circumstances. So free will does have a place in our spiritual efforts, giving us the possibility of choosing at any given moment the alternative that leads us Godward. Advanced spiritual aspirants, who are practised in attuning their wills to God's will, find that it is really God's will that operates through them as they act. For others, divine inspiration often comes through their own purified minds. As Sri Rāmakrishna says, the mind itself eventually becomes the guru.

Although, as we see, self-effort has an essential role in spiritual life, the importance of God's grace must always be recognized. God is the self-willed sovereign. He is not bound by any conditions. But self-effort paves the way for the grace of God to be operative. As Sri Rāmakrishna said, the breeze of grace is ever blowing; our duty is to set our sail to get the benefit of that breeze. Of course, by stressing self-effort, we should not become more egotistic. For God has given us the body, mind, and senses with which we serve Him; how can we feel self-important? The task of a spiritual aspirant is to forget his ego by identifying himself with the Higher Being or by surrendering himself to Him. Egoism is identification of ourselves with the body and

mind, forgetting that we are really the Self. This is not conducive to spiritual progress. On the other hand, as Sri Rāmakrishna said, there is no harm in thinking of oneself as the child or servant of God.

> If you find that you cannot drive off this feeling of "I", then let it remain as the "servant I". There is not much to fear from the ego which is centred in the thought, "I am the servant of God; I am His devotee." Sweets cause dyspepsia, but not sugar-candy which is an exception. The "servant I", the "I" of a devotee, the "I" of a child—each of these is like a line drawn with a stick on the surface of water; this "I" does not last long. (*Sayings* 121)

In his teachings Sri Rāmakrishna fully recognizes the power of divine grace and yet strongly encourages self-exertion. He says:

> Adopt adequate means for the end you seek to attain. You cannot get butter by crying yourself hoarse, saying, "There is butter in the milk." If you wish to get butter, turn the milk into curd and churn it well, and then you will have butter. So if you long to see God, take to spiritual practices. What is the good of merely crying, "O God! O God!" ? (*Sayings* 582)

Ācharya Shankara speaks of three prime necessities for spiritual realization: human life, intense desire for liberation, and guidance from a great teacher. The first condition is already fulfilled. The second too is in our hand, although to a great extent it requires self-effort. If that is satisfied, the third also is automatically fulfilled. That has been found to be the spiritual law.

Buddha stressed self-effort, saying:

> Exertion is my beast of burden; carrying me to Nirvāna he goes without turning back, to the place where having gone one does not grieve. (*Kāshi-bharadvāja-sutta*)

Christ also spoke of self-effort when he said:

> And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
>
> For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (Luke 11: 9, 10)

The spiritual disciplines enjoined by all religions, the practices of austerity, self-control, japa, and meditation, are all forms of self-effort used for spiritual development. Hence we see that self-effort is consistent with the theories of free will and karma and even grace, for as long as we do not feel the effects of grace, we must exert effort to achieve the highest goal.

9

SELF-NEGATION OR SELF-EXPANSION?

How to sublimate the ego, by negation or expansion, is a question that perplexes many. Sri Rāmakrishna said in various contexts that a devotee should practise humility. He should pray to the Lord that he has no spiritual virtues, that his only hope is divine grace. Swāmi Vivekānanda, on the other hand, spoke of the glory of the human soul and said that self-confidence and positive thoughts should always be cultivated. He said that whoever does not believe in himself is an atheist.

To quote Sri Rāmakrishna:

If you wish to thread a needle, make the thread pointed and remove all protruding fibres. Then it will easily pass through the eye of the needle. So, if you wish to concentrate your heart and soul on God, be meek, humble and poor in spirit and remove all the spreading filaments of desire.

To become great one must be humble. The nest of the skylark is on the earth below, but it soars high into the sky. High ground is not fit for cultivation; low ground is necessary, so that the water may stand on it.

Rain-water will never stand still on high ground, but will run down to the lowest level; even so the mercy of God remains in the heart of the lowly, but drains off from those of the vain and proud.

Unless one becomes simple as a child, one cannot reach divine illumination.

It is needful to have no egotistical feeling, such as the conceit of the preacher.

The tree laden with fruit always bends low. So if you wish to be great, be lowly and meek.

Be as free from vanity as the dead leaf carried on by the high wind.

But this humility should not be for show:

Many a man with a show of humility says, "I am like an earthworm grovelling in the dust." In this way, thinking themselves always to be worms, in time they become weak in spirit like worms. Let not despondence ever enter into your heart. Despair is the greatest enemy in the path of progress. As a man thinks, so he becomes.

Swāmi Vivekānanda forcefully stressed the need for self-expansion by extending the ego to embrace the whole of creation. This can be done if we are aware of the all-powerful nature of the Self. So he said:

The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself.

Have faith that you are all, my brave lads, born to do great things. Let not the barks of puppies frighten you, no, not even the thunderbolts of heaven, but stand up and work.

What makes you weep, my friend? In you is all power. Summon up your all-powerful nature, Oh mighty one, and this universe will lie at your feet. It is the Self alone that predominates, and not matter. It is those foolish people who identify themselves with their bodies that piteously cry, "Weak, weak, we are weak."

> Vedānta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error; and the greatest error, says the Vedānta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this and that.
>
> Rajas is badly needed just now. More than ninety per cent of those whom you now take to be men of the sattwa quality are only steeped in the deepest tamas. What we now want is an immense amount of rājasika energy, for the whole country [India] is wrapped in the shroud of tamas.
>
> Manifest the divinity within you, and everything will be harmoniously arranged around it.

Sri Rāmakrishna too said:

> The faith-healers order their patients to repeat with full conviction the words, "There is no illness here at all." The patients repeat them, and this mental suggestion helps to drive off the disease. So if you think yourself to be morally weak, you will actually become so in a short time. Know and believe that you are of immense power and the power will come to you at the last.

He warns us that humility should not be confused with weakness or want of self-respect.

> A true man (mānush) is only he who is a mān-hus—one endowed with a sense of self-respect. Others are men only in name.

Sri Rāmakrishna distinguishes between the two types of ego, saying:

> There are two types of ego, the "ripe" and the other "unripe". "Nothing is mine, whatever I see,

> or feel, or hear, nay, even this body itself, is not mine; I am always eternal, free and all-knowing", —such ideas arise from the "ripe" ego. "This is my house, this is my child, this is my wife, this is my body",—thoughts of this kind are the manifestation of the "unripe" ego.

While the unripe ego must be given up, the ripe ego can be retained. As for humility and pride, he beautifully said:

> No pride is pride that expresses the glory of the soul. No humility is humility that humiliates the self.

These two attitudes regarding the ego are practised by followers of different yogas. The age-old method of the devotee is to control the ego by abasing himself, speaking disparagingly about his own qualities, and surrendering himself to God. The follower of the path of knowledge, however, identifies himself with the Ātman and its all-glorious nature and tries to imbibe its qualities. He rejects the idea of defects in the soul and asserts they are only of the body and the mind.

An interesting remark was made by Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great devotee of Sri Rāmakrishna. Commenting on the extreme humility of Nāg Mahāshay, another devotee of Sri Rāmakrishna, he said that Mahāmāyā, the Great Illusioner, tried to bind both Nāg Mahāshay and Swāmi Vivekānanda with Her rope of Māyā. But, through his extreme humility Nāg Mahāshay's ego became so small, he slipped right through Her noose. Swāmi Vivekānanda, on the other hand, was too big to be bound by the rope, for he identified himself with the infinite Self.

The difference here is between two types of self, one with a small "s" and the other with a capital "S". The jnānayogis identify themselves with the deathless nature of the Ātman, the Self which is not different from Brahman and so is all-powerful. The bhaktiyogis consider themselves as an individual self who is part or servant of the all-powerful Lord. They never think that they are themselves all-powerful; all their strength comes from complete dependence on the Lord.

The jnāna approach which Swāmi Vivekānanda stressed has great social value. People practising this identification with the Self are apt to imbibe great confidence and courage, solace and succour from it. As William James said after hearing Swāmi Vivekānanda's lecture on the Ātman:

> *An Absolute One, and I that One,*—surely we have here a religion which, emotionally considered, has a high pragmatic value; it imparts a perfect sumptuosity of security.

There was a historical reason too for Swāmi Vivekānanda to place so much stress on this idea. During the last few centuries the people of India had been weighted down by the feeling of their own utter unworthiness. In the social field this had a very debasing effect. Swāmiji tried to raise Indians from lethargy and the humiliation of considering themselves useless. But this idea is useful to many in other countries also.

Such a positive attitude is psychologically very beneficial too. Many religio-psychologists preach this idea nowadays.

The practice of humility is an age-old method followed by devotees throughout the world. Repent and you will be pardoned is the burden of this teaching.

God is not realizable by any amount of spiritual practices. It is His grace that is all-powerful, and surrender is the best way to attain it. Moreover, who can claim that he has spiritual strength enough to get liberation? An awareness of one's weakness and failings is present in every man, and one who fully recognizes them surrenders to God. It is on this principle that the idea of confession grew in Christianity. The quality of humility has been stressed in all devotional schools. Some Western writers and holy men have praised it in the following words:

> The doctrines of grace humble man without degrading, and exalt without inflating him.—Charles Hodge

> Let me truly feel that in myself I am nothing, and at once, through every inlet of my soul, God comes in, and is everything in me.—W. Mountford

> Should you ask me, what is the first thing in religion? I should reply, the first, second, and third thing therein—nay, all—is humility.—St. Augustine

> God walks with the humble; he reveals himself to the lowly; he gives understanding to the little ones; he discloses his meaning to pure minds, but hides his grace from the envious and proud.—Thomas à Kempis

Self-centredness is a great bane in human life. Counteracting it with an attitude of humility is surely beneficial for people who suffer from pride. Positing the glories of the Self will be very useful for those who are burdened with a feeling of incompleteness and inferiority. Both attitudes are philosophically satisfying from

the standpoints of non-dualism and theism. Emotionally, too, they are beneficial to different temperaments. Whichever method is followed will be a boon to the individual as well as to society.

The problem arises when we are to decide which of the two alternatives we are to follow; in fact, we want to know whether we are devotional or intellectual by temperament. This is a real difficulty. Experience has shown that it is best to practise both attitudes, self-negation and self-expansion, according to the mood that predominates in us. We may regularly practise both attitudes at different times each day. Eventually a particular attitude is usually found to be our special one, and thenceforward the decision becomes easy. Till then a sort of dichotomy in thought and approach may remain. But a clear understanding of the practical implications and philosophical background of each will free us from a serious cleavage of thought.

In olden days spiritual aspirants who followed different systems of belief did not meet much, except for discussing the virtues of their respective methods on philosophical grounds. But nowadays, with the study of comparative religions, we sometimes are drawn away from our attitude of one-pointed devotion. But we hope this catholicity will lead to liberalism, and each method will enrich the other by complementing it.

Life is an organic whole. It is natural that different attitudes and feelings will suit different men. It may also be profitable for one person to practise several attitudes so that each enhances the other. The attitudes of jnāna, bhakti, yoga, and karma, as Swāmiji pointed out, are complementary and not contradictory. Sri Rāmakrishna's life shows that in one life these can be combined. Moreover, Swāmiji thought that this makes

for a perfect character, cast in what he described as the Rāmakrishna-mould. Swāmi Vivekānanda presented this as an ideal for the modern age. We hope that by a judicious combination of attitudes, at least in the beginning, a more perfect and satisfying character can be formed. And this ultimately is the test of the validity and usefulness of all disciplines.

10

NINE MEANS OF DEVOTION

In a well-known shloka of the *Bhāgavata* (VII. 5. 18), nine aspects of bhakti are listed.[1] They are: 1. Hearing the names of God or His Incarnation chanted or sung by others, or hearing narration of or songs in praise of His charms, pastimes, and attributes; 2. Chanting or singing His names, narrating or singing of His charms; 3. Remembering or thinking of His names and charms; 4. Showing respect to Him by visiting the sacred places associated with His pastimes, looking at His images or pictures depicting His pastimes, serving and keeping company with His devotees, and showing respect to things connected with His memory; 5. Worshipping Him in an image by offering flowers, sandal paste, food, etc.; 6. Bowing down before Him or His image at the place of worship; 7. Serving Him in the attitude of a devoted servant; 8. Comradeship with Him—thinking that one has a mutually loving, intimate friendship with Him and behaving towards Him accordingly, generally in relation to His images; 9. Resignation to the Lord—devoting oneself entirely to His services. According to the devotional schools these steps belong to vaidhi bhakti or devotion as prescribed in the scriptures. Through practising them, one develops an intimate feeling for God, which leads to premā bhakti.

The *Adhyātma Rāmāyana*, which is sometimes described as the Bhāgavata Rāmāyana, speaks of another nine means of devotion. Sri Rāma in the Rāmāyana and Sri Krishna in the Bhāgavata are incarnations of the same God about whose glory these books speak.

Contemplation of God and contemplation of these Incarnations are of equal value—such is the considered opinion of the scriptures. The Adhyātma Rāmāyana is based on the non-dualistic philosophy, and so it considers jnāna-mishrā-bhakti, knowledge combined with devotion, to be the most fruitful spiritual discipline. It emphasizes devotion as a sādhanā which ultimately leads to knowledge and release. These nine steps to devotion are the advice given by Sri Rāma to the woman Tāpasi Shabari, who had said that she was quite unfit to have His darshan, being only a low-born maid. Sri Rāma then told her (III. 22–30):

> Manhood or womanhood, caste or station in life does not give one the fitness to worship Me; devotion alone can do that. Even by performing sacrifice, charity, austerities, or study of the Vedas and performing rituals, men are not able to see Me, if they are not devoted to Me. So I shall tell you in brief the means for acquiring that devotion. Contact with holy men is said to be the first sādhanā. The second is talk and discussion about Me. The third is repeatedly thinking about My qualities. Explaining the scriptures which contain My words is the fourth sādhanā. Unreserved worship of the Teacher as Myself is the fifth. A pure character, the practice of yama, niyama, etc., and steadfastness in daily worship of Me constitute the sixth sādhanā. Repetition of My mantra with other accessories is the seventh. Reverencing good devotees, seeing Me in all beings, detachment regarding external things, along with the practice of shama, etc., are the eighth. Discrimination about Truth is the ninth. These are the nine means of

> Bhakti. Whoever, man, woman, or other creatures, is endowed with these means of devotion will have bhakti along with prema. As soon as this loving devotion arises, one has the realization of My Nature. And whoever realizes My Nature becomes liberated in this life itself. Hence, know bhakti to be the first means to mukti. Those who are first endowed with these means of bhakti, gradually perform the other means too. So they can have bhakti and then mukti.

The scheme of bhakti prescribed in the above shlokas is in line with the well-known views of the scriptures and teachings of the saints. Sādhu-sanga, or contact with holy men, is very important in generating detachment and devotion. Only by association with them can the amorphous spiritual ideas of an aspirant become crystallized. When study, ritual, and the like cannot satisfy us, the advanced sādhakas can transmit to us a little of their conviction, zeal, and steadfastness. The sage Agastya in the Adhyātma Rāmāyana says:

> The contact of holy men is the root of release. . . . For through holy company a taste develops for hearing about Him; from that arises devotion to the eternal God; from devotion comes clear knowledge, and from that knowledge, release comes. This is the path followed by the wise.[2] (III. 3. 36 & 39–40)

The second means is talking and discussing about God and His Incarnations. The exploits of Sri Rāma in the Rāmāyana and of Sri Krishna in the Bhāgavata are very inspiring and ennobling. We get clear ideas about spiritual verities through them. When virtue de-

ines and vice prevails, the Incarnations come down to
ıe world to regenerate and reinstate religious values.
y continuous contact with these ideas, we become
onvinced of their validity and one-pointed attention
evelops. About the importance of hearing and dis-
ussing the exploits of the Incarnation, Sri Krishna says:

> He who thus knows, in true light, My divine birth and action, leaving the body, is not born again: he attains Me, O Arjuna. (*Gitā*, IV. 9)

The third means is repeated thought about the ualities of God and His Incarnations. The Ātman is to e repeatedly heard about, thought about, and con-emplated upon, says the Upanishad. After one has a ıorough theoretical understanding of the real nature f God, man, and the universe, it should be imprinted n the mind by deep reflection in order to remove Māyā's hold on the soul. As you think, so you become, the principle. Moreover, by frequent thinking about ıe sāttvic qualities, which are essential for spiritual rogress, we imbibe those qualities. Patanjali, the great cientific writer of the yoga system, says that the Highest an be realized, samādhi can be obtained, through con-emplation of God—*Ishvara-pranidhānāt vā*.

The fourth sādhanā is explaining the scriptures which eal with the words of God and His Incarnations. wādhyāya and pravacana, studying the scriptures one-elf and explaining them to others, have been re-ognized methods since the Upanishadic age. For in rying to explain ideas to others, the ideas become learer in one's own mind.

The fifth means is the worship of the guru as God Himself. This idea has been accepted by all the religious ystems and is particularly emphasized by the devo-

tional schools. The Vedas declare that knowledge must be received from a guru; no amount of study is of any avail. And for the guru's words to be the most fruitful, there must be great faith in his words of wisdom. About the importance of the guru, Swāmi Vivekānanda says:

> This insufficiency of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why, although almost every one of us can speak most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit the impulse must come from another soul. The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru—the teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the Sishya—the student.

The sixth sādhanā consists of leading a pure life, performing daily worship, and practice of the eightfold yoga. The eightfold path of yoga, which has been forcefully presented by Patanjali, has been incorporated by almost all the systems in their respective disciplines. Yama and niyama are external and internal cleanliness, āsana is the steady posture necessary for being able to forget the body in long meditation, and prānāyāma is control of the vital breath for physical and psychical strengthening and purification. The next three steps constitute the elements of concentration: Pratyāhāra is trying to gather the mind, dhāranā is focussing the mind on one point or on the Chosen Deity, and dhyāna is remaining in the one thought without break. Samādhi is the mastery of the mind and its complete mergence in the Divine. To bring the mind under control elaborate formal worship has been prescribed. In another chapter of the Adhyātma Rāmāyana there is a detailed descrip-

tion of ritual worship, and this method is prevalent even now.

The seventh means of devotion consists of repeating the mantra which contains the name of the Chosen Deity. This has acquired the greatest importance in most of the religious systems. The divine formula received from a guru has special potency, and by its repetition all spiritual benefits are derived. Many are the sayings regarding its supreme efficacy. A well-known verse asserts that, without doubt, it is by japa alone that spiritual success is achieved.

The eighth sādhanā consists of several elements. Showing respect to good devotees of God has been accepted as part of spiritual discipline, for by contact with them we imbibe the divine qualities they possess. Seeing God in all beings is an advanced stage of sādhanā. The Gitā points out that the same-sighted yogi sees God in everything. Since all creation is His and He manifests Himself as all beings, it is quite in the fitness of things that recognition of this should itself be a part of sādhanā. Vairāgya, or detachment toward external things, is an equally important discipline. This is the complement of seeing God in everything. Vairāgya and spiritual practice are the methods by which the Highest is achieved, says the Gitā. The six treasures of sādhanā spoken of in the Advaitic system are also included in the eighth step. These are: shama, dama, uparati, titikshā, shraddhā, and samādhāna—controlling the internal and external organs, withdrawing the senses from sense-objects, bearing all sufferings without any reaction, having faith in the words of the guru and the Vedānta, and concentration of the mind on the Goal.

The ninth means of devotion is discrimination about Truth. The Vedāntic system regards this as an especially

important discipline. In fact, according to some, this is the only sādhanā that is necessary.

These are the ninefold means of bhakti, says the Adhyātma Rāmāyana. By practising these, bhakti is perfected and from vaidhi bhakti, devotion as prescribed in the scriptures, the aspirant passes to premā bhakti, which is full of love and devoid of motive. Brahma-jnāna then dawns. Thus the Adhyātma Rāmāyana harmonizes the claims of the followers of jnāna and bhakti, the paths of discrimination about the real nature of things and worship of the Deity, the path to the Impersonal and the Personal. Pure knowledge and pure devotion are the same, said Sri Rāmakrishna, and by the realization of the one the other also is realized. The modern prophet of harmony thus substantiates the position of the author of the Adhyātma Rāmāyana. By satisfying the intellectual and emotional elements in our nature, certainly this ninefold discipline will be able to give us maximum spiritual benefit.

NOTES

1. श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
   अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥
2. साधुसंगतिरेवात्र मोक्षहेतुरुदाहृता ।
   सत्संगमो भवेद् यर्हि त्वत्कथाश्रवणे रतिः ।
   समुदेति ततो भक्तिस्त्वयि राम सनातने ॥
   त्वद्भक्तावुपपन्नानां विज्ञानं विपुलं स्फुटम् ।
   उदेति मुक्तिमार्गोऽयमाद्यश्चतुरसेवितः ॥

II

THE HOLY MOTHER AND SIMPLE FAITH

Religion is a very natural thing in a man's life. It is in his very constitution. Primitive man had a natural faith. A child also has this natural faith in everything around him. But with the development of his mind, with the acquiring of reason and knowledge, he begins to doubt. The Biblical story of Adam's tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge and his downfall which resulted is true in a sense. The high pedestal where man was in intimate relations with the higher spirit is his no more, for his ego separates him from God. The function of religion is to regain that unity. So to develop in religion is to develop this natural faith. That is why all the great teachers have advised man to return to the simplicity of a child. Says Sri Rāmakrishna:

> Till one becomes simple like a child, one cannot get divine illumination. Forget all the worldly knowledge that you have acquired and become as ignorant of it as a child; then you will get the knowledge of the Truth.

There is also the well-known saying of Christ:

> Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The psychological benefit of cultivating the attitude

of a child is immense. Modern man is beset with many difficulties over which he has no control. He can face them only if he has a simple faith in God applied in life situations. What we learn when we read the life and talks of the Holy Mother is this same simplicity in religion. The simple way is the way of faith and surrender. This is enough to lead the devotee gradually to the highest goal. So she said to one person:

> Why are you afraid, my son? Know that the Master is ever behind you. And I am there. Don't fear so long as I am your Mother.

Religion consists of this natural relationship with God and His Incarnations. Religious life does not mean something artificial or vague or remote. It is not posing a thing that we don't have. Nor is it creating conflict in the mind by absorbing differing subtle philosophical ideas. The philosophers are there to debate the meaning or truth about them. Simple religious life does not require all these cogitations. Marguerite the mystic once reproved a nun who tried to assume what she regarded as an appropriately grave exterior:

> There is no sin being thought silly, but there may easily be sin in trying to look so correct. Do let yourself be natural!

The Holy Mother too says, even about a man of realization:

> What else does one obtain by the realization of God? Does he grow two horns? No, his mind becomes pure, and through a pure mind one attains knowledge and awakening.

The Holy Mother is a mother first and a teacher next.

Or it may be said that she is the mother among teachers or the teacher among mothers. Who else but a mother would waive the injunctions of the scriptures and tell her spiritual child, "My son, can a mother ever be step-motherly? You may, if you like, first eat and then begin japa and meditation."

The Holy Mother's religion is a religion of simple faith and surrender. Faith requires simplicity, guileless-ness, and openness of mind. It is more than enough if the devotee can develop the attitude of a kitten. The kitten has absolute faith in its mother. It surrenders and depends on her totally. The only effort it makes is to cry "mew, mew". The mother cat too feels her re-sponsibility and is all attention to the kitten. Similarly, what happens when a small boy tries to cross a busy thoroughfare? Everyone on the street feels concerned about him and tries to help him. Likewise, let us depend on God. Let us throw our burdens down right now and surrender to Him. Devotees sometimes say they have surrendered all, but they do not accept in their heart of hearts that God has taken their burdens and is leading them. That means the ego is still active and they have not yet been able to surrender totally. They must try hard to look to God and God alone and raise as few doubts as possible. Then the path will be clear and smooth. As Francois de Sales wrote once to Jeanne de Chantal, the Mother Superior of the Order of the Visitation:

> Simplify your judgment. Do not have too many objections but walk simply and with confidence, do not look so much in this or that direction, but keep your eyes steadfastly focussed on God and on yourself.

The Holy Mother instructed her despondent spiritual children in the same manner. All the details of why and how cannot be solved. The devotee's part is only to depend on God. Once a devotee said to the Holy Mother that he was not able to meditate. She replied, "It does not matter. It will be enough if you look at the picture of the Master." The devotee said, "Mother, I do not succeed in regularly counting the beads three times a day." The Holy Mother's answer was, "If that is so, then think of the Master; perform your japa whenever you can; at least you can salute him mentally, can't you?" This is spiritual discipline in its barest simplicity. Burdened with the samskāras of past lives or of the present one, many devotees are not fit to practise more rigorous disciplines. So the mother in Sāradā Devi guided them in the easiest way possible. This is not because these devotees will always remain at that stage. A time will come when they will begin to march more quickly. It is also true that God does not look at the amount of effort made, but sees the longing and faith of the devotee. The Holy Mother says:

> God is not like fish or vegetables that you can buy Him for a price.

And again:

> You talk of having done so much japa, or so much work; but nothing will avail. Who can achieve anything unless Mahāmāyā opens the way? O creatures, surrender yourselves, just surrender yourselves. Then only will She be gracious and clear the way for you.

Of course, this does not mean that the Holy Mother did not stress spiritual practices. "Don't relax your prac-

tices," she used to say, "simply because you do not get His vision. Does an angler catch a big carp every day the moment he settles down with the fishing rod? He has to wait, and many a time he is disappointed."

God is like a child, said Sri Rāmakrishna. Sometimes a child does not like to part with a piece of cloth and says, "No, my father has given it." But after some time when somebody offers him a toy worth half an anna, he gladly exchanges the cloth for it. The nature of God is similar. The Holy Mother used the same analogy of a child and said:

> Do you know, my child, what it is like? It is just like a candy in the hand of a child. Some people beg the child to part with it. But he does not care to give it to them. And yet he will easily hand it over to another whom he likes. A man performs severe austerity throughout his whole life in order to realize God, but he does not succeed, whereas another man gets his realization practically without any effort. It depends upon the grace of God. He bestows His grace upon anyone He likes. Grace is the important thing.

Of course, that does not nullify the idea of karma. In the *Gospel Of Sri Rāmakrishna* there is a story of a worshipper of the Divine Mother who gathered together all the ingredients for worship in a cremation ground. When he sat to make japa a tiger attacked him and dragged him away. Another man had climbed to the top of a tree nearby out of fear of the tiger. When he saw everything ready there for worship, he came down from the tree and sat on the worshipper's seat. No sooner had he begun to do japa than the Divine Mother appeared before him and wanted to grant him his

wishes. The devotee said: "Mother, you are so partial. This poor man took all the trouble to prepare for your worship, and he was devoured by the tiger. I have not done anything, but I have got your darshan so easily." The Divine Mother replied, "My son, you have been doing severe austerities for several lifetimes, and now you have attained the result. It is not the effect of your karma in this life only."

Āchārya Shankara too accepts this idea in a different context. Implicit in the concept of the avatāra is the idea of redemption. It knows no barrier. Like God, the Divine Incarnations can grant liberation to whomsoever they like. It is no question of merit on the part of the devotee. It is purely and simply the grace of God. Like Sri Rāmakrishna the Holy Mother too said:

> The grace of God is the one thing that is needful. One should pray for the grace of God. . . . It is only if one takes shelter in God that one is saved.

As for the suffering and other effects of karma, the Holy Mother has beautifully explained:

> The result of karma is inevitable. But by repeating the Name of God, you can lessen its intensity. If you were destined to have a wound as wide as a ploughshare, you will get a pin-prick at least. The effect of karma can be counteracted to a great extent by japa and austerities.

The Divine Incarnations descend to redeem man. They show us the straight path to realization. And is not realization the be-all and end-all of religion? To be suffused with the Divine is both the way and the goal. A simple faith in God and a sincere effort to lead one's life according to God's wishes are all that is wanted.

But alas! religious life is often so mixed up with extraneous things which may be useful but which are often meaningless. The path is confused with the goal; the discipline to lead to a state of realization is considered proof of the achievement of the state itself. That is why when a sādhaka reaches a milestone in the upward journey, either he or his followers claim that he has reached the summit. It is not that all are false prophets; they are often sincere souls with some attainment. But these are the days of advertisement, and so in a short time much noise is made about a thing which should be kept well-guarded and secret. Even sincere people lose sight of the highest ideal. Many lesser people also imitate them but only in externals, and as a result bring infamy not only to themselves, but also to the sincere, more evolved sādhakas.

It may be asked: how can one recognize a man of realization? Admittedly, it is very difficult. The scriptures have given some descriptions here and there, and men of realization have themselves indicated some signs. But these are so various and include so many individual peculiarities that an ordinary man can easily be puzzled. He then either loses faith in all holy men, or becomes too credulous. That is why Swāmi Vivekānanda was particular that excellence of character must be the basic standard. Naturalness in religious life should not be lost sight of. Probably with regard to the extreme type of mystics, full of intense longing for God, no rule of behaviour can be set. But for the vast majority of sādhakas, common sense and reason are important qualities. If a sādhu is obviously a person of noble virtues, and if along with noble virtues he also has visions and ecstasies, they can be regarded as genuine. So Swāmi Vivekānanda said, "All religion is

to be based upon morality, and external and internal purity is to be counted superior to Dharma. It is necessary always to remember that forms and ceremonials, though absolutely necessary for the progressive soul, have no other value than taking us on to that state in which we feel the most intense love for God." He then concludes, "Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, not even in reasoning. It is being and becoming."

The Holy Mother also spoke of the highest but most difficult discipline. Thus we find her saying to a devotee once: "God alone is true. Everything else is false." "If you can be free from desires, this moment itself will you be free." And again, "He who is able to renounce all for His sake is a living god. Even the decrees of fate are cancelled if one takes refuge in God."

But she would speak very rarely in this vein and that too only to a few deserving people fit to receive a grim truth calmly. The general way shown by the Holy Mother, however, was more pleasant and smooth, yet spiritually potent enough to help the devotee to progress in slow but sure steps, or proceed in quicker pace if the intensity is more. This pleasant way is nothing but the way of simple faith and surrender.

12

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND SHANKARA

Every religious system prescribes for its followers a regular discipline which will lead them to the ultimate goal. That discipline is naturally formulated in tune with that system's conceptions of the Ultimate Reality and the objective of life. In this sense, the Advaita Vedānta of Āchārya Shankara is a religion as well as a philosophy, for in the process of establishing Brahman as the Highest Truth in his writings, Shankara also points out the methods of sādhanā, spiritual discipline, which are embedded in the Vedānta books. Shankara was an ideal spiritual teacher. He himself practised sādhanā and attained the highest realization. He then recorded his experiences and opinions in order to establish a philosophical system which would set forth rationally the spiritual truths he had experienced and also to discourage speculation about religious matters by people who had not had realization.

The different statements and descriptions regarding the Reality in the Upanishads have been harmonized and given a well-integrated form by Shankara in his theory of the levels of reality. From the absolute standpoint the Supreme Reality is Nirguna Brahman, which is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. From the relative standpoint the same Reality is Saguna Brahman or Ishvara, the Personal God who may be worshipped. The highest goal of life is to realize Brahman,[1] and the state of realization, which in fact is ever-attained, is called kaivalya or nirvāna. A worshipper of Ishvara

reaches realization of Saguna Brahman, after which he is not born again. The knower of Nirguna Brahman realizes that he is always free from the wheel of birth and death. Nirguna Brahman, being free from all attributes, cannot be described as omnipotent, omniscient, etc. All these qualities belong to Ishvara. Saguna Brahman or Ishvara, endowed with the adjunct of collective consciousness, is the material and efficient cause of the universe. From the absolute standpoint, however, there is in reality no jagat (universe), no jiva (individual soul), no Ishvara. Yet while holding the absolute viewpoint to be true philosophically, Shankara recognizes that all these entities are real when looked upon from the standpoint of the jiva.

Shankara regards the Veda as infallible and as having a purpose. The very fact that it describes the created universe is proof positive that it has a purpose. For creation implies imperfection, and in order to escape the realm of imperfection, sādhanā is necessary. Thus according to him the purpose of the Veda is upāsanā, contemplation. In his commentary on sutra 1.1.14 of the *Brahmasutras* Shankara says that texts dealing with creation are for the purpose of sādhanā. And in his commentary on sutra 1.1.20 he states expressly that all limitations superimposed on Brahman are for the purpose of upāsanā. He further clarifies this point in several other places (e.g., 3.2.33, 1.2.14).

Without entering into the discussions found in Shankara's commentary on the *Brahmasutras*, we shall merely state the conclusions relevant to our study. In the *Adhyāsa Bhāshya* he makes it clear that sādhanā is meant for one who has not yet realized the Self. Sādhanā is possible only during one's lifetime, when one's bondage is, at least temporarily, felt to be real. The effect of

sādhanā is the destruction of good and evil karma, which are the root cause of bondage. Through sādhanā knowledge dawns and the Self is realized. In this venture, work is an indirect means to knowledge. It does not itself bring about liberation, but it purifies the mind so that knowledge may dawn.[2] So for an aspirant endeavour is of supreme importance, for only this is within his domain.

The one instrument of realization is jnāna, knowledge, pure and simple.[3] But the aspirant must be fit for jnāna, and for this, three rare things are necessary—human birth, intense longing for liberation, and refuge in a great soul.[4] A qualified teacher or guru is he who can encourage the disciple and show him the way. In the *Manishā-panchaka* Shankara says that whoever has firm realization is fit to be a guru.[5] In his commentary on the *Taittiriya Upanishad* he speaks of intense desire for realization, and the capacity as well as the opportunity to strive for it, and freedom from disabilities as necessary for the fitness of the aspirant. The *Sādhanā-panchaka* prescribes a number of prerequisite qualities for the aspirant, as do the first few lines of many of Shankara's other books. But four qualifications are the most important in making an aspirant fit for knowledge. Only after obtaining them should one take up the inquiry into Brahman.[6] These qualities are essential for the aspirant to be able to transform his life, to become steady and tranquil, and to become detached from even his own thoughts and his ego. The purpose of discipline is to develop self-control and will-power and to strengthen the buddhi or determinative faculty. And by the purified buddhi the detached nature of the Self is to be understood and all identification with the ego is to be given up, for bondage according to Advaita

means the identification of the individual soul with its adjuncts. The sādhana chatushtaya, or four requisites for spiritual knowledge, are viveka, vairāgya, shatsampatti, and mumukshutva.

1. Viveka is discrimination between the Real and the unreal, arriving at an intuitive and unshakable conviction that Brahman alone is Real and everything else is unreal and illusory.

2. Vairāgya or renunciation is utter disregard for all pleasures of this world and of the next, for they are transitory and bind the soul to the chain of karma.

3. Shatsampatti or the six treasures form the ethical foundation of spiritual life. They are:

a. Shama or calmness: withdrawing the mind from sense-objects and fixing it on Brahman only.

b. Dama or self-control: restraining the organs of perception and action.

c. Uparati or self-settledness: not allowing the mind to drift back to the objects of the senses, and also completely withdrawing from the demands of life.

d. Titikshā or forbearance: endurance of all afflictions and freedom from anxiety, grief, and the pairs of opposites.

e. Samādhāna: complete concentration as guided by the teacher and the scriptures.

f. Shraddhā: faith in the words of the teacher and the scriptures, characterized by optimism and an affirmative attitude towards the endeavour, as distinct from a merely mechanical, unquestioning belief.

4. Mumukshutva is intense longing for liberation. It must be coupled with one-pointedness, faith, etc.[7]

These four sādhanās must be done with enthusiasm

and devotion. These are the prerequisites for Vedāntic sādhanā. In *Ātmānātma-viveka* Shankara is more liberal and says that the householders, even if they are not endowed with the four sādhanās, may derive much benefit from discrimination about the Ātman.[8] However for the maximum benefit, the four sādhanās are essential.

The aspirant who is thus qualified for Vedāntic sādhanā arrives at the Truth through the method known as adhyāropa and apavāda, superimposition and negation. It is through inscrutable ignorance that the characteristics of the Self have been superimposed upon the non-Self, and one regards the Real as the unreal and vice versa. Apavāda is the elimination of these superimpositions through discrimination. To make the bound soul aware of these superimpositions, the cosmology, the five sheaths, and other aspects of the universe and the individual being are discussed and discarded as unreal by the discriminative process of "not this, not this". The mahāvākyas (the four great dicta found in the Upanishads) are prescribed for contemplation and repetition. After extensive practice, performed with purity of mind, duality is finally removed and Brahman shines supreme.

In order to have direct realization of Brahman, certain steadying disciplines are necessary. These are shravana (hearing), manana (reflecting), nididhyāsana (meditation), and samādhi (absorption). After hearing repeatedly of the oneness of the jiva and Brahman, one reflects on Brahman constantly and strengthens his conviction by reasoning. Then one turns the mind to dwell without a break in the thought of Brahman. This is meditation. When he is successful, the aspirant enters samādhi, absorption in Brahman. Later Vedānta

teachers recommend the yoga system of Patanjali as a means to realization, and they analyse samādhi as being of two types, savikalpa and nirvikalpa, and enumerate the obstacles to samādhi and how to overcome them. The four Vedāntic disciplines called yogas are also developed. Shankara recognizes three of them—jnāna, bhakti, and karma (the paths of knowledge, devotion, and selfless work, respectively)—though he makes the latter two subservient to jnāna.

Shankara prescribes upāsanā for purifying the mind-stuff. Upāsanā is of three types: (1) Angānga-baddha, in which a part of a sacrifice may be meditated upon as Brahman (e.g. the horse-sacrifice in the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*). (2) Pratika, in which one meditates upon Brahman through a symbol, considering it as Brahman (e.g. an emblem of Shiva or Vishnu). (3) Ahamgraha, in which the Self is regarded and meditated upon as Brahman. According to the *Nirguna-mānasa-pujā* (9.19), a person practising this upāsanā worships the Ātman as his Chosen Ideal. Upāsanā has also been described as either saguna or nirguna, according to whether the conception of Brahman is with or without attributes.

Shankara recognizes the value of worship. For the bound soul the world is real and Ishvara is its creator, preserver, and destroyer. From the relative standpoint the jiva is not equal to God, just as a clay rat is never equal to a clay elephant, though both are made of the same substance. "The waves may belong to the ocean, but the ocean never belongs to the waves."[9] The jiva's relation to God is one of worship, service, and love. Thus the whole range of bhakti discipline is accommodated by Shankara in his scheme. He accepts the importance of prayer and devotion to the Personal God, though the ultimate goal is the realization of the iden-

tity of both the jiva and Ishvara in Brahman. Rituals are useful but inadequate if the basic idea of Brahman behind the worship is forgotten and the worship is not performed with devotion. The path of bhakti is especially well-suited for beginners, but advanced souls also have special regard for the Personal God, for they look upon Ishvara as the highest manifestation of the Absolute. Bhakti is single-minded zeal and unswerving passion for the realization of the Truth. This, needless to say, is not dry intellectualism or speculative philosophy or scientific inquiry for details. As Shankara says, "Among things conducive to liberation, devotion alone holds the supreme place."[10] And seeking after one's real nature or the nature of the soul is designated as devotion.[11]

Shankara says that there can be no liberation without knowledge; it does not come even after a hundred lives of merely mechanical worship, ritualistic bathing, or charity.[12] He also says that the Absolute cannot be formally invoked or worshipped.[13] But when he is not writing about communion with the Absolute or establishing the rationale for Truth, he exhibits a very exalted spirit of adoration for the different aspects of God and is not lagging behind any devotional teacher in that respect. A perusal of his hymns will convince anyone that Shankara gave great importance to the devotional attitude towards God. In his various hymns he takes refuge in Bhavāni,[14] prays to Vishnu,[15] worships Govinda,[16] desires to be a fish in the waters of the Gangā,[17] considers all achievements of life useless unless mind goes to the feet of the guru,[18] prays to Shiva for forgiveness and protection from the sufferings of the world,[19] and tells the Divine Mother that there is no sinner like himself and no destroyer of sin like Her.[20]

By undergoing the disciplines of karma, bhakti, and jnāna the mind is purified and knowledge dawns, and by experiencing ineffable Peace, Knowledge, and Reality the sādhaka, spiritual aspirant, becomes āpta-kāma, self-fulfilled. The *Viveka-chudāmani* graphically describes how a knower of Brahman expresses his first amazement on emergence from the experience: "Where is the universe gone? By whom is it removed and where is it merged? It was just seen by me; has it ceased to exist? It is passing strange."[21] "Blessed am I. I have attained the consummation of my life."[22] After repeated experience of nirvikalpa samādhi he becomes established in Brahman. He becomes a jivan-mukta, one who is liberated in life.

Thus far we have discussed Shankara's prescription for sādhanā as found in his writings. If we turn to his life we find his instructions exemplified there. His devotion and service to his guru, Govindapāda, his love for his mother, his sympathy for suffering people are all our ideals. He wrote the commentaries and hymns and purified the Tantras for the spiritual regeneration of the country. He established monasteries at the four corners of India for the practice, preservation, and propagation of Vedāntic knowledge. He strengthened the role of the custodians of traditional spiritual culture and rejuvenated the temples and places of pilgrimage. His life was also a synthesis of different means of spiritual endeavour. His ideas on sādhanā, embedded in his writings and in his life, are so logical, scientific, and rational and at the same time so full of devotional fervour and determination to establish a higher life on earth, that they satisfy our intellect and also capture our imagination. They hold good even now. We are only to obey his commands and work out their implica-

tions for our own edification and for the moral improvement of society.

NOTES

1. ब्रह्मावगतिर्हि पुरुषार्थः । *Sūtra Bhāṣya* 1. 1. 1.
2. चित्तस्य शुद्धये कर्म न तु वस्तूपलब्धये । *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* 11.
3. *Sūtra Bhāṣya* 3. 4. 1. Also in 1. 1. 4. सति च विधिपरत्वे यथा स्वर्गादिकामस्य अग्निहोत्रादिसाधनं विधीयते, एवम् अमृतत्वकामस्य ब्रह्मज्ञानं विधीयते इति युक्तम् ।
4. दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतद्देवानुग्रहहेतुकम् ।
   मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥ *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* 3.
5. सैवाहं न च दृश्यवस्त्विति दृढ़प्रज्ञापि यस्यास्ति चेत् ।
   चाण्डालोऽस्तु स तु द्विजोऽस्तु गुरुरित्येषा मनीषा मम ॥
   Maniṣā-pañcaka 5.
6. तस्मात् यथोक्त साधनसम्पत्त्यनन्तरं ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा कर्तव्या ।
   Sūtra Bhāṣya 1. 1. 8.
7. *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* 21–27. See also *Ātma-bodhaḥ* (Introduction by Swami Nikhilananda), Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1955, p. 43.
8. साधनचतुष्टयसम्पत्त्यभावेऽपि गृहस्थानामात्मानात्मविचारे क्रियमाणे तेन प्रत्यवायो नास्ति, किन्त्वतीव श्रेयो भवति । 3.
9. सामुद्रो हि तरंगः क्वचन समुद्रो न तारंगः । *Viṣṇu-ṣaṭpadī* 3.
10. मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी । *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* 31.
11. स्वस्वरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते । *Ibid*, 31.
    स्वात्मतत्त्वानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यपरे जगुः । *Ibid*, 32.
12. कुरुते गंगासागरगमनं व्रतपरिपालनमथवा दानम् ।
    ज्ञानविहीने सर्वमनेन मुक्तिर्न भवति जन्मशतेन ॥
    Carpaṭa-pañjarikā 17.
13. पूर्णस्यावाहनं कुत्र सर्वाधारस्य चासनम् ।
    स्वच्छस्य पाद्यमर्घ्यं च शुद्धस्याचमनं कुतः ॥ *Ātmapūjā* 2.
14. गतिस्त्वं गतिस्त्वं त्वमेका भवानि । *Bhavānyaṣṭka*.

15. अविनयमपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय विषयमृगतृष्णाम् ।
Viṣṇu-ṣaṭpadī 1.

16. भज गोविन्दम् । *Carpaṭa-pañjarikā.*

17. वरमिह नीरे कमठो मीनः । *Gaṅgāstotra* 11.

18. गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे मनश्चेन्न लग्नं ततः किम् ··· । *Gurvaṣṭkastotram.*

19. क्षन्तव्यो मेऽपराधः शिव शिव शिव भोः श्रीमहादेव शम्भो ।
Śivāparādha-kṣamāpaṇa-stotram.
संसारदुःखगहनाज्जगदीश रक्ष । *Śiva-pañcākṣara-stotram.*

20. मत्समः पातकी नास्ति पापघ्नी त्वत्समा न हि ।
Devyaparādha-kṣamāpaṇa-stotram 12.

21. क्व गतं केन वा नीतं कुत्र लीनमिदं जगत् ।
अधुनैव मया दृष्टं नास्ति किं महदद्भुतम् । *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* 483.

22. धन्योऽहं कृतकृत्योऽहं । *Ibid*, 488.

13

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND RĀMĀNUJA

Throughout the ages great spiritual souls have been born for the purpose of reinstating religion. With the passing of time the vitality of a religious movement lessens as the lives of its followers gradually stray from the ideal. Then is the time for the advent of another great teacher who, in accordance with the needs of the time, preaches the highest ideals and the spiritual disciplines for realizing them. The teachings of all great souls are true, for all of them preach their messages as guided by God Himself. This is so because all of them, through mystical realization, have become attuned to God and He has become real to them. Then why do there seem to be so many differences between their views? A careful comparison shows that the differences are only apparent and not real. The differences are mainly a matter of emphasis; the substance of their teachings and the goals they set before mankind are essentially the same.

The purpose of religion is to free man from his identification with the body and make him realize that he is the spirit. A man must attune his mind to God, and to take man's mind to God, worshipful action is as helpful as prayer and contemplation. Thus Sri Krishna prescribed unselfish action as a primary means to realization. But with the passage of time, people began to put more attention to the observance of ritualistic actions, forgetting the goal. Their actions became meaningless from the spiritual standpoint, for the proper

attitude toward a religious action is more essential to spiritual growth than the action itself. Then came Buddha, who saw the futility of action bereft of higher thought. He rejected the external forms of religion and reminded man that religion is primarily a matter of spiritual realization. His teachings created a great stir and made man once again sensitive to spiritual values.

But as time passed, religion again declined. People were able to speak theoretically of enlightenment, but for all practical purposes they compromised their religious ideals. Then arose Kumārila Bhatta, who protested against the Buddhistic philosophies and preached the supremacy of Vedic ritual. His aim was to free the human mind from the thraldom of mere talk and have men engage instead in practice. Most men require some practical application of the basic ideas of religion in order to grasp them, and while action without a higher ideal is spiritually fruitless, it is also true that action is the portal to deeper thought.

However, human nature is such that one way of life can never be satisfying to all. The more reflective people were not satisfied with Kumārila's glorification of ritualistic action and the next world. Then came Shankara. He preached the Vedāntic path of knowledge primarily for the intellectually-inclined and prescribed the observance of the duties set forth for one's station of life in the scriptures for all. As a result, the social chaos and nihilistic ideas of degenerate Buddhism were wiped out.

However, to perform rites strictly according to Vedic injunctions or to follow the discipline of knowledge is difficult for most people. So religion at this point was a guiding factor in the lives of only a few people who were suitably qualified; for the vast masses of men, religion remained an elegant philosophy which they were un-

able to put into practice. At this time Rāmānuja came and preached a doctrine of bhakti, or devotion, combined with knowledge and action. This was well-suited to the needs of the common people and appealed to intellectuals and ritualists as well. Rāmānuja was one of the first teachers to emphasize devotion as the means to realization. Later religious teachers who promulgated different systems of worship based their ideas on his devotional approach to God. Thus, his system of thought became the pattern for religious life.

The philosophical basis of Rāmānuja's teachings is vishishtādvaita, or qualified non-dualism. This is a form of non-dualism in which the Supreme Reality, Brahman, is regarded as both one and manifold. The manifold is made up of chit and achit, conscious and unconscious elements, which are in gross form during creation and in subtle form during dissolution. Rāmānuja's own doctrine is a form of theism. The Supreme Truth, according to him, is the Lord Nārāyana. The word "Brahma", meaning "great", is used to characterize Him. The universe (achit) and the individual souls (chit) are His attributes or body.[1]

Rāmānuja preached that God is all-merciful, all-pervading, and the repository of all good qualities.[2] By His inscrutable power He creates, sustains, and dissolves the world. All living beings are His parts. Because of their sinful actions, the individual souls have forgotten their real nature and do not know God. But if they worship God with devotion, they will come to know their real nature, the nature of God, and their mutual relationship with Him of servant and Master. By pleasing God through worship and obtaining His grace, they can be freed from the effects of their karma and attain direct vision of Him. This is the goal of life.

Having attained this, they will no longer experience birth and death. They will be freed from ignorance and live eternally in bliss in the company of Nārāyana, having realized their true state, being similar to but not identified with Him. This is moksha or release,[3] and all are entitled to it. This liberation, however, must be sought through the proper means.

Rāmānuja set forth a method of spiritual discipline or sādhanā for the purpose of attaining the vision of God and removing the fears inherent in an ungodly life. Broadly speaking, Rāmānuja upheld the varnāshrama-dharma, the devoted practice of the duties appropriate to one's spiritual station of life as taught in the scriptures.[4] His special stress, however, is on methodical, one-pointed devotion, through which a devotee sacrifices his all to God and becomes fearless. Devotion intensified becomes the path of prapatti, complete surrender to the will of God.

According to Rāmānuja, karma, which is work or active virtue, consists of sacrifices, charity, austerity, prayers, the five mahāyajnas or great sacrifices, offering oblations to the fire, pilgrimages, living in a holy place, fasting, and other similar observances. Karma is auxiliary to jnāna. Jnāna, or knowledge, according to Rāmānuja, is knowledge of the soul and of God through study of the scriptures and actual experience.[5] It consists of five parts—knowing one's own nature, the nature of God, the goal, the means to the goal, and the obstacles on the path. Jnāna includes rāja-yoga and is auxiliary to bhakti. Swāmi Vivekānanda gives a broad definition of bhakti which encompasses its different grades: "Bhakti is a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realization beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for Ishvara."

Rāmānuja defines bhakti as incessant, loving meditation on God.[6] Meditation may be centred around His essence, His attributes, symbols of His power and grace, or images of Him. It may be concrete (sālambana) or abstract (nirālambana). Meditation, according to Rāmānuja, is constant remembrance of the thing meditated upon, flowing like an unbroken stream of oil poured from one vessel to another.[7] The idea that worship of God is constant remembrance of Him is supported in various scriptural texts. Constant remembrance is bhakti,[8] says Rāmānuja. Such continuous thought of God is as good as direct vision of Him. It is the means of liberation, and in its mature form it is designated as parā-bhakti.

In the *Vedārtha-samgraha* Rāmānuja distinguishes between sādhana-bhakti, devotion cultivated as a spiritual discipline and consisting of purifying virtues, and parā-bhakti, the spontaneous devotion of a more advanced soul. Parā-bhakti is

> a process consisting of knowledge, taking the form of meditation, which develops into perceptual vividness and concreteness which ultimately becomes one with the absorbing devotion to God. . . . When the sādhanā develops to this perfection, the Supreme reveals itself. That revelation, if lasting, is Mukti (liberation) itself. If it is momentary it adds to the intensity of love that is called Parama-bhakti.[9]

Several qualifications are necessary for pursuing the spiritual quest. In the last verse of the *Vedārtha-samgraha* Rāmānuja addresses the book to those who are gifted with discriminative insight into what is essential and non-essential, who are endowed with breadth of vision

and openness of mind, and who are solely guided by pramānas,[10] that is, by what has been proven to be true and untrue. Although the path of devotion is essentially the practice of firm and fixed remembrance of God, there are other factors which contribute to it. In his commentary on the *Vedānta-sutras*, Rāmānuja speaks of the seven aids to bhakti.[11] These are viveka, vimoka, abhyāsa, kriyā, kalyāna, anavasāda, and anuddharsha. Prapatti is considered either an independent sādhanā or not a sādhanā at all, being the culmination of all sādhanās.

(1) Viveka is discrimination. One must discriminate regarding the purity of one's food, which goes to build up the body and the mind-stuff.[12] Swāmi Vivekānanda discusses this point in his *Bhakti-yoga* and concludes that "it stands to reason that discrimination in the choice of food is necessary for the attainment of this higher state of mental composition, which cannot be easily obtained otherwise." On the other hand, he also points out that "extravagant, meaningless fanaticism" regarding food "is a peculiar sort of pure and simple materialism."

(2) Vimoka is control of the passions, detachment from objects of desire, and longing for God.[13]

(3) Abhyāsa, or practice, is repeatedly concentrating the mind on God.[14] Abhyāsa and vimoka are tersely mentioned in a shloka of the *Gitā*: "By practice, O son of Kunti, and by non-attachment is it attained."[15]

(4) Kriyā is doing work sanctioned by the scriptures according to one's capacity[16]—performing the five mahāyajnas or great sacrifices, which are scriptural study, worship of the deities, duties to one's forefathers, to other human beings, and to the animal kingdom.

(5) Kalyāna is wishing well and doing good to all. It is characterized by truthfulness, simplicity, compassion

or doing good to others without any gain for oneself, charity, non-violence or not injuring others by thought, word, or deed, not coveting others' goods, and not brooding over injuries received from another.[17] Kalyāna is attainable through purity. "Purity is absolutely the basic work, the bed-rock upon which the whole bhakti-building rests", as Swāmi Vivekānanda puts it, and he adds, "We must always remember that external practices have value only as helps to develop internal purity. . . . The forms have value only so far as they are expressions of the life within."

(6) Anavasāda is cheerfulness and hope,[18] which bring enthusiasm and strength.

(7) Anuddharsha is the absence of exaltation, a mean between the two extremes of excessive joy and absence of joy.[19] Swāmi Vivekānanda commented:

> Excessive mirth makes us unfit for serious thought. It also fritters away the energies of the mind in vain. The stronger the will, the less the yielding to the sway of the emotions. Excessive hilarity is quite as objectionable as too much of sad seriousness, and all religious realization is possible only when the mind is in a steady, peaceful condition of harmonious equilibrium.[20]

Prapatti or sharanāgati, surrender to the Supreme, is the best of all sādhanās. In his introduction to the seventh chapter of the *Gitā*, Rāmānuja describes that chapter as teaching "the resignation of oneself to Him in firm faith (prapatti) so as to be able to tear the veil of matter".[21] The vishishtādvaitic stress on self-surrender is epitomized in three mantras, each of which expresses self-surrender and which together are the key to spiritual life. These are the mula-mantra, translated

"I bow down to Nārāyana"; the dvayamantra, which is similar to the one in the *Shvetāsvatara Upanishad* (6.18); and the charama shloka (*Gitā*, 18.66).

> If the Mulamantra explains the theory of Sharanāgati and the Dvayamantra elaborates it, and shows also how it is to be practised, the Charama Shloka explicitly prescribes Sharanāgati as the means to be adopted by the Mumukshu (aspirant) incapable of Bhakti-Yoga or as the response to divine grace and expressly promises him release from all the accumulated load of sins that prevent his enjoyment of the birthright of absolute service to the Lord in Paramapada.[22]

Prapatti is complete resignation to God. Six factors are distinguishable in prapatti—(1) acquisition of qualities which make one a fit offering to God, (2) avoidance of conduct not acceptable to God, (3) faith that one will be protected by God, (4) appeal for His protection, (5) a feeling of one's own insignificance, and (6) absolute self-surrender.[23] The last is sometimes called the angin or main body, of which the other five are angas or parts.

By another analysis, prapatti is made up of three elements, namely, a firm conviction that one belongs essentially to God (swarupa-samarpana), the firm dedication of the fruits of one's endeavours to God (phala-samarpana), and the transfer of the responsibility of oneself in the matter of spiritual progress to Him (bhāra-samarpana). Prapatti implies totally relinquishing the sense of being the "doer" and offering this "doership" to God.[24] Complete resignation to God makes a devotee fearless and assured of salvation, for

he no longer depends on his own limited resources but on the infinite resources of God.

There are two kinds of surrender. One type of surrender is practised in order to perfect bhakti; it is regarded as leading indirectly to God. The other type of surrender leads directly to God. The devotee intensely feels his own inability to struggle for realization and at the same time is impatient for the vision of the Lord. Bhakti as such is not given up, but it is no longer practised as a sādhanā. With respect to this kind of surrender it has been observed: "The vision of God is not an achievement. It is a gift of God." "Nothing by way of human effort is a direct and self-sufficing means to the attainment of the vision of God. This is a basic truth. No process of nature is a process independent of God. It is an operation of the Supreme."[25]

There are two types of devotees who practise complete surrender, the patient (ārta-prapanna) and the impatient (dripta-prapanna). The impatient prapanna finds his present life apart from God so unbearable that he seeks immediate salvation by death. In his case, both kinds of karma—karma which is in force now (abhyupāgata-prārabdha) and karma which has not yet begun to take effect (abhyanupāgata-prārabdha)—are remitted at once, and the soul is accepted for eternal blessedness. The patient prapanna is one who lives out his present life; however, it is his last birth, and he will attain eternal bliss after death. Such a soul is again distinguished from the devotee whose sins have all been remitted, except for that karma which has begun to fructify, and who may have to be reborn a number of times before that karma is exhausted. It is said that devotees who have received the grace of the

guru or of the Saviour are granted salvation automatically, whether they are initially seeking it or not.[26]

There are two interesting anecdotes which show how Rāmānuja trained his disciples in the realization of prapatti. He had a disciple named Dāsarathi who was anxious for Rāmānuja to instruct him in surrender as taught in the "last word of the *Gitā*" (*Gitā*, 18.66). Rāmānuja asked him to take the lowly job of a cook in the house of the daughter of Rāmānuja's teacher, Goshtipurna. Dāsarathi readily and cheerfully accepted the work, which he performed selflessly. After he was released from the job, Rāmānuja gave him instruction about self-surrender. However, Dāsarathi had already practised and become established in self-surrender by serving as a cook with an attitude of egolessness.

Another of Rāmānuja's disciples, Dhanurdāsa, was excessively attached to his wife, Hemāmbā. When Rāmānuja questioned him on this point, he told him that it was Hemāmbā's eyes that he found so enchanting. Rāmānuja then took him to the temple and showed him the deity Ranganātha, and Dhanurdāsa fell in love with those divine eyes, which were even more enchanting. Both Dhanurdāsa and his wife became great devotees. Later on, Rāmānuja wanted to teach his other disciples the nature of self-surrender and at the same time show them Dhanurdāsa's greatness. Rāmānuja asked Hemāmbā to put on all of her jewelry, telling her that it would be pleasing to the Lord. He then asked his other disciples to go to Dhanurdāsa's house, steal Hemāmbā's jewelry, and wait there to see what she and her husband would do. In the meantime, Rāmānuja kept the unsuspecting husband with him, engaging him in conversation. Hemāmbā was lying on her side, seemingly asleep. The disciples, who under-

stood all this to be a joke, approached her and took the jewels from one half of her body. Hemāmbā felt that it was the Lord Himself in the form of thieves who was taking away her jewels, and, as if in sleep, turned over so that the jewelry could be taken from her other side. The disciples were frightened and ran outside, but waited as Rāmānuja had asked to see what would happen next. When Dhanurdāsa returned home and heard the story from his wife, he scolded her: "Your sense of possession has not yet gone. The Lord was taking away his own things. Why did you try to help him?" Such was the quality of surrender the devotee had acquired!

Religious knowledge can be preserved in unadulterated form and handed down to posterity by three main means—the recording of ideas, the propagation of ideas, and spiritual discipline. Books written by great teachers have saved their systems of thought from being mixed with superstition or wrong ideas. Propagation of those ideas has kept the knowledge alive, fresh, and free from superstition.[27] The scriptural truths as presented by Rāmānuja in his writings were discussed in the monasteries, retreats, and temples of India, and this preserved his ideas intact. But the mere existence of a method or knowledge about it cannot be fruitful in attracting people and changing their lives. Religion is nothing if it is not realized, making practical in life what is preached, and spiritual aspirants get inspiration from the lives of more advanced aspirants. So discipline must be practised and exemplified. Practical discipline hence is the most important part of the reestablishment of religion. Rāmānuja's method of sādhanā provides a clear-cut path which has satisfied the spiritual hunger of devotees down the ages. His in-

fluence is still a potent force. It is up to the spiritual aspirants to dive deep into his ideas, practise the disciplines suggested by him, and attain the direct vision of God.

NOTES

1. *Śrī Bhāṣya* I. I. I.; also cf. श्रीमन्नारायण एव चिदचिद्विशिष्टाद्वैत-तत्त्वन्—Sriman Narayana along with *cit* (the sentient) and *acit* (the non-sentient) for His qualifications is the sole Reality, one without a second. (*Yatindramatadīpikā*, p. 2.) by Swāmi Ādidevānanda.
2. ब्रह्मशब्देन च स्वभावतो निरस्तनिखिलदोषोऽनवधिकातिशयासंख्येय-कल्याणगुणगणः पुरुषोत्तमोऽभिधीयते । *Ibid*, I. I. I.
   Also सर्वत्र बृहत्वगुणयोगेन हि ब्रह्मशब्दः । *Ibid.*
3. अविद्यानिवृत्तिरेव हि मोक्षः । *Ibid.*
4. तदुत्पत्तये सर्वाण्याश्रमकर्माणि यावज्जीवमनुष्ठेयानि । *Ibid.*
5. *Gītā* with Sri Rāmānuja's commentary (p. 573) by A. Govindāchārya.
6. स्नेहपूर्वमनुध्यानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते ।
   Quoted by Rāmānuja in *Gītā* commentary, ch. 7.
7. ध्यानं च तैलधारावदविच्छिन्नस्मृतिसन्तानरूपा ध्रुवा स्मृतिः ।
   Śrī Bhāṣya.
8. एवंरूपा ध्रुवा स्मृतिरेव भक्तिशब्देनाभिधीयते । *Ibid.*
9. Introduction to the *Vedārtha-saṁgraha*, by S. S. Raghavachar, p. 151.
10. सारासारविवेकज्ञाः गरीयांसो विमत्सराः ।
    प्रमाणतन्त्राः सन्तीति कृतो वेदार्थसंग्रहः ॥
11. तल्लब्धिर्विवेकविमोकाभ्यासक्रिया कल्याणानवसादानुद्धर्षेभ्यः संभवान्निर्वचनाच्चेति । *Śrī Bhāṣya* I. I. I.
12. cf. जात्याश्रयनिमित्तदुष्टादन्नात् कायशुद्धिर्विवेकः ।
13. विमोकः कामानभिष्वङ्गः ।
14. आरम्बणसंशीलनं पुनःपुनरभ्यासः ।

15. *Gītā* 6. 35.
16. पञ्चमहायज्ञानुष्ठानं शक्तितः क्रिया ।
17. cf. सत्यार्जवदयादानाहिंसानभिध्याः कल्याणानि ।
18. दैन्यमभास्वरत्वं मनसोऽवसादः तद्विपर्ययोऽनवसादः ।
19. तद्विपर्ययजा तुष्टिरूद्धर्षः तद्विपर्ययोऽनुद्धर्षः ।
20. *The Complete Works of Swāmi Vivekānanda*, III, p. 69.
21. A. Govindāchārya, p. 230.
22. *The Philosophy of Visishtādvaita* (p. 389) by P. N. Srinivasachari. The three mantras referred to are (1) the Mūlamantra ॐ नमो नारायणाय, (2) the Dvayamantra, viz. श्रीमन्नारायणचरणौ शरणम् प्रपद्ये and श्रीमते नारायणाय नमः, (3) the Carama śloka or the last word of the *Gītā*, viz. सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज । अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ (18.66)
23. *Indian Philosophy* (Vol. II, p. 705) by S. Radhakrishnan.
24. Introduction to the *Vedārtha-saṁgraha*, p. 153.
25. *Ibid*, pp. 147--148.
26. A. Govindāchārya, p. 574.
27. *Ramanuja Charita*. (p. 50) by Swāmi Premeshānanda.

14

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND MADHVA

Vedānta philosophy is divided into three main schools—advaita, vishishtādvaita, and dvaita—non-dualism, qualified non-dualism, and dualism respectively. These separate schools arose over different interpretations of the basic scriptures, especially the *Brahma-sutra* of Vedavyāsa. Āchārya Madhva was the main teacher of the dvaita school, and he also founded the Vaishnavite sect known as Sadvaishnavism, as distinguished from Srivaishnavism popularized earlier by Rāmānuja. Madhva was born near Udupi (Udipi) on the west coast of India in 1197 (some say in 1238) A.D., and is regarded by some as the incarnation of Vāyu, the son of the Lord Nārāyana. He renounced the world and was initiated into sannyasa by Sri Achyutapreksha and became known as Ānandatirtha. He is also known by the names Vāsudeva, Purnaprajna, and Sarvajna. Madhva's views differed from those of his teacher, who was an advaitist, and he wrote his own commentaries on the major scriptures. Through his scholarly ability, penetrating logic, and his holy life, he was able to found his sect on a firm basis. Madhva was a prolific writer. Besides his commentaries on the *Gitā*, the *Brahma-sutra*, and the Upanishads, he also wrote several independent works. His works number thirty-seven in all and are collectively known as the *Sarva-mula-granthās*. Jayatirtha and Vyāsaraya are two noted dialecticians of his school.

The basic tenets of Madhva's philosophy are sum-

marized in an oft-quoted saying:[1] Sri Hari is the Supreme Being, omniscient and infinite. The individual souls are different from and subservient to the Supreme Soul. The world is real. There is difference between the Supreme Soul and the individual souls, between the Supreme Soul and inert matter, between the individual souls and inert matter, between one individual soul and another, and between one inert body and another. The individual souls trapped in the eternal cycle of birth and death can obtain moksha, liberation, through the grace of God, which is obtained through virtuous deeds and pure devotion. The liberated souls enjoy eternal bliss in the presence of God, each according to its nature. Direct perception, reasoning, and the scriptures are the three sources of correct knowledge. All the Vedas and other scriptures sing the praises of God.

The fundamental principle of the dvaitavāda, the dualistic school, is that both the knower and the object of knowledge must be real, for no knowledge is possible unless both are real. Madhva says: "No knowledge can be posited without a knower and an object known." Thus all knowledge can only be relative. According to Madhva, as stated above, the pramānas, the means and instruments of knowledge, are three—perception, inference or reasoning, and scriptural texts. Whatever is known through these means is directly related to the object of knowledge. On the basis of this theory of knowledge Madhva contends that the world, even though fleeting, is real because it is perceived as real.

The doctrine of vishesha, or difference between one entity and another, is also a basic truth of the dvaitavāda, and like Madhva's theory of knowledge, is based on common perceptual experience. Sri Madhva recognized panchabheda, five kinds of differences be-

tween the Supreme Being (Brahman), the individual soul (jiva), and inert matter (jada). As stated above, there are differences (a) between God and individual souls, (b) between God and non-living matter, (c) between one soul and another, (d) between souls and matter, and (e) between units of matter.[2]

There are two categories of existence in the universe, Independent Existence and dependent existence, Svatantra and asvatantra. God is the only Independent Being, omniscient and omnipotent. He is also omnipresent, for He is not limited by time and space and the dependent entities "do not form a resisting medium to His presence." The dependent entities are the individual souls and inert matter, both of which are dependent on God. Souls by nature are conscious and intelligent. They are classified as eternally free, freed, and bound (nitya, mukta, and baddha). The bound souls can attain freedom through the practice of spiritual disciplines. There are, again, three classes of bound souls, differing from each other in their essential natures and ultimate states of existence. The muktiyogya souls are those fit for liberation. They are moral and devoted to God, and they alone will attain salvation and enjoy eternal bliss in Vaikuntha, the abode of the Lord. The sritiyogya souls, also called misra-jiva meaning having a mixed nature, will never attain salvation but will be subject to birth, death, and other experiences. The tamoyogya souls are those who are opposed to God and His devotees; they will suffer eternal damnation.[3]

The eternal bliss enjoyed by the souls who have attained salvation is of four kinds, varying according to the degree of proximity to God they have attained. Sālokya-moksha is residing in the same region as God, thus in heaven, experiencing satisfaction and enjoyment

from the continual sight of Him. Sāmipya-moksha is having a location particularly near God, such as is enjoyed by the sages. Sārupya-moksha is having an outward form similar to that which God possesses, as do God's attendants like Jaya and Vijaya, two attendants of Nārāyana. Sāyujya-moksha is entering into the body of God, in which state the individual soul can experience His Divine Enjoyment. Sārshti-moksha, which is a type of sāyujya-moksha, means enjoying the same powers that God possesses. This can only be experienced by entering into the body of God and identifying oneself with His particular powers. The concept of differences in the states and privileges enjoyed by the liberated souls in heaven forms one of the cardinal doctrines of Madhva's system; for if such differences are not acknowledged, the fundamental dualistic principle that all souls are eternally different from one another would not be upheld.[4]

The sādhanā, or means of attaining liberation, set forth by Madhva includes disciplines for the cultivation of bodily purity, moral excellence, and spiritual introspection and are based on the Upanishadic injunctions of shravana, manana, and nididhyāsana—hearing, reflecting, and meditating. These disciplines are fully elaborated in the Eightfold Yoga. The observance of these practices culminates in the development of bhakti, devotion; devotion in turn brings the attainment of divine grace.

A writer of Madhva's school has compiled a long list of factors which lead to liberation: Experience of the sorrows of the world, association with good men, renunciation of all desires for enjoyment of pleasures whether in this world or in some heavenly realm, self-control and self-discipline, study, association with a

good teacher and study of the scriptures according to his instructions, realization of the truth of those scriptures, discussion of the proper means for strengthening one's convictions, loving respect for the teacher, loving respect for God, kindness towards one's inferiors, love for one's equals, loving respect for one's superiors, cessation from actions that result only in pleasure or pain, cessation from prohibited actions, complete surrender to God, realization of the five differences between God, soul, and matter, realization of the difference between Prakriti and Purusha (Nature and Soul), appreciation of the different stages of advancement among men and among other living beings, both higher and lower, and the proper performance of worship.

Upāsanā or worship is of two kinds: worship in the form of religious and philosophical study, and worship in the form of meditation.[5] Meditation, or dhyāna, which is identified with the nididhyāsana of the Upanishads, means continuous thought of God as the Spirit, as Existence, and as the possessor of pure consciousness and bliss, leaving all other things aside. Meditating thus on God is only possible when a firm conviction about God has been generated and all false ideas and doubts have been dispelled through study of the scriptures and through rational thinking and discussion.

Madhva defines bhakti in his *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirnaya* as follows:[6]

> Bhakti is intense affection for the Lord, surpassing everything else, combined with awareness of His greatness. Only through such devotion is release obtained, not by any other means.
>
> Bhakti is intense and everlasting affection, transcending (love for self, wife, children, etc.) and

acquired through knowledge of Hari. Statements to this effect found in the Vedas direct one along the path of spiritual progress.

All other virtuous actions are only for the purpose of fostering bhakti. Bhakti alone leads to release, and even after release bhakti continues to bring one bliss eternally.

Bhakti again is said to be of three kinds: (a) sādhārani-bhakti, ordinary devotion which has not yet been intensified through hearing and study of the scriptures, (b) paramā-bhakti, devotion which dawns after direct knowledge of God, and (c) svarupa-bhakti, devotion which gives intense bliss. This last is the sādhya-bhakti, the goal, and is defined as naija-sukhānubhuti, experiencing the bliss of one's real nature.[7]

Bhakti is characterized by desirelessness and by faultless service of God. Charitable deeds, pilgrimages, austerities, and other observances are auxiliary to the service of God. As Madhva says:

> Through continuous worship and disinterested performance of the duties for which one is best suited, it is possible for everyone (who is qualified) to see Lord Hari, but not by any other means.
>
> As this rule is laid down by Hari, no sentient being can deviate from it. Even Hari Himself, determined to maintain His own plan, never makes exception to it.
>
> Charity, pilgrimage, penance, sacrifice, and all other good deeds are only aids to the worship of Hari. Devotion alone leads to liberation.[8]

In *Krishnāmrita-mahārnava* Madhva writes that one should remember the miseries of hell and try to keep

oneself away from sin; one should always sing the name of Hari and offer Him all one's actions, being free from the desire for their fruits. Madhva strongly encourages the practices of fasting on the ekādashi tithi (the eleventh day of the moon) and putting holy marks on the body. The worship of Vishnu according to Madhva's sect consists of (a) ankana, marking the body with His symbols, (b) nāmakarana, naming children and other objects of love with His names, and (c) bhajana, singing His glories. One group of Madhva's followers, the Dāsakutas, has especially emphasized the singing of the Lord's name, and this distinguishes them from the other group, the Vyāsakutas.[9] The Dāsakutas use "Dāsa" as their surname, while the Vyāsakutas use "Tirtha". The householder disciples take the surname "Acharya".

Vishnu, the Consort of Lakshmi, is the primary Chosen Deity of the Sadvaishnavite tradition.[10] Bālagopāla, the Boy Krishna, is also worshipped as the Chosen Deity. The Bālagopāla at the temple in Udupi is a very important deity. The very sight and worship of this image are believed to take the devotees along the road to salvation. There is an interesting story about the origins of this image. At one time Madhva was living at Vadabhāndeshwar, which is three miles from Udupi on the coast. One day, when Madhva was on the seashore, a boat approaching the area was caught in a severe squall and was about to sink. Seeing a holy man on the shore, the captain of the boat appealed to him to save him. Madhva waved his upper cloth in the air and made a mystical mudrā, and the wind stopped. The grateful captain offered all the riches in his boat to Madhva, but he accepted only the lump of sandalwood, gopi-chandana, which was used as ballast. Breaking it open, he found a beautiful, perfect image of the Boy

Krishna inside. He carried the image to Udupi, singing the praises of Lord Nārāyana in ecstasy along the way. These hymns, organized into twelve chapters, are known as the *Dvādasha Stotra*. He washed the image in a pond, later known as the Madhva Sarovara, and installed it in the temple and started worshipping it. This worship has been continued since then even to this day. It is conducted by turns by the eight pontiffs of the eight monasteries of Udupi, the original heads of which were disciples of Sri Madhva.

Madhva passed away at the age of seventy-nine. His philosophy and method of sādhanā have had great influence on later Vaishnavite sects, especially the sect founded by Sri Chaitanya. Madhva's philosophy differs from that of other Vaishnavite teachers, like Rāmānuja, Vallabha, and Nimbārka, on two main points: In maintaining the doctrine of unqualified difference between God, soul, and matter; and in recognizing Brahman as only the efficient cause and not the material cause of the universe. In methods of sādhanā the several Vaishnavite sects are similar to each other, although the aspects of sādhanā that each stresses may differ. Madhva's method of spiritual discipline can be useful even to spiritual aspirants who accept a different philosophy or spiritual goal, for one must begin one's spiritual journey in the realm of duality. There is a saying among the advaitins that they are advaitins in views but dvaitins in deeds. Madhva's stress on austerity of life, meticulous observance of rituals, and devotional fervour will surely serve as a model for all genuine seekers after God.

NOTES

1. श्रीमन्मध्वमते हरिः परतमः सत्यं जगत्तत्त्वतो
भेदो जीवगणा हरेरनुचरा नीचोच्चभावं गताः ।
मुक्तिर्नैजसुखानुभूतिरमला भक्तिश्च तत् साधनम्
अक्षादित्रितयं प्रमाणमखिलाम्नायैकवेद्यो हरिः ॥
2. जीवशिवयोर्भिदा चैव जीवभेदः परस्परम् ।
जडेशयोर्जडानां च जडजीवभिदा तथा ॥
पंचभेदा इमे नित्याः सर्वावस्थासुनित्यशः ।
मुक्तानां च न हीयन्ते तारतम्यं च सर्वदा ॥

Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirnaya I. 70–71.

3. *Ibid.* I. 87–90.
4. cf. Das Gupta: *Indian Philosophy*, IV, p. 318.
5. उपासना च द्विविधा, सततं शास्त्राभ्यासरूपा ध्यानरूपा च ।
6. माहात्म्यज्ञानपूर्वस्तु सुदृढः सर्वतोधिकः ।
स्नेहो भक्तिरिति प्रोक्तस्तया मुक्तिर्न चान्यथा ॥
ज्ञानपूर्वः परस्नेहो नित्यो भक्तिरितीर्यते ।
इत्यादिवेदवचनं साधनप्रविधायकम् ॥
भक्त्यर्थान्यखिलान्येव भक्तिर्मोक्षाय केवला ।
मुक्तानामपि भक्तिर्हि नित्यानन्दस्वरूपिणी ॥

I. 86, 107 & 106.

7. *Anuvyākhyāna* 3. 4.
8. *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirnaya* I. 98–100.
9. *Three Great Acharyas*, p. 275.
10. इष्टी नो रमापतिः । *Tattvodyota.*

15

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND NIMBĀRKA

One of the theistic schools of Vedānta is the Svābhāvika-bhedābheda-vāda. Āchārya Nimbārka was the propounder of the Vaishnava faith following this philosophy. Few details of his life are known. He was probably born after the thirteenth century A.D., although there is another view that he lived during the eleventh century either in the Bellary district of Karnataka or in Nimbagrāma in Vrindāvana. He was born in a Telugu brahmin family, the son of Aruna and Jayanti Devi. He is known as Niyamānanda, Nimbāditya, Haripriya as well as by the name Nimbārka, and he is considered by followers of his sect to be the incarnation of the sudarsana chakra, the discus of Lord Vishnu. According to tradition, he was a lifelong celibate. In the later period of his life he took the vows of sannyāsa and went to Vrindāvana to practise intense sādhanā. He then travelled throughout India and preached his doctrine. Srinivāsa, Devāchārya, Keshava Kashmiri, Mādhava-Mukunda, Anantarāma, and Purushottama are some of the noted writers of his school.

Sri Nimbārka's most important works are a short commentary on the *Brahma-sutra* called *Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha* and the *Dashashloki*, verses in which he elucidates his philosophy of the distinctness of jiva, Isvara, and jagat (the individual soul, God, and the world). A full exposition of Nimbārka's philosophy can be found in *Vedānta-kaustubha* written by his disciple Srinivāsa. Nimbārka's *Brahma-sutra* commentary is

very concise and non-controversial. Of the four main Vaishnavite sampradāyas or schools, his belongs to the Sanatkumāra sampradāya. He based his system of thought on the teachings of Sri Rāmānuja, as all the bhakti schools did, and he also was influenced by the ideas in the vritti of Audulomi. Theologically, however, his philosophy is similar to the Chaitanya school, which came later. The essentials of his philosophy address five topics: the nature of God; the nature of the finite self; bhakti; the obstacles to bhakti; and mukti, which is the fruit of the Lord's grace.[1]

The ultimate categories or realities, according to Nimbārka, are Brahman (Supreme Reality), chit (conscious being), and achit (inert matter), and the relationship between them is described in Nimbārka's theory of svābhāvika-bhedābheda. Brahman, chit, and achit are respectively the controller, enjoyer, and enjoyed. Brahman is Krishna and is always accompanied by Rādhā, who is to be worshipped conjointly with Him. In the *Dashashloki*, Nimbārka speaks explicitly about Rādhā-Krishna as the Ultimate Reality.

Brahman is the highest reality, the creator and ruler of the universe. He is possessed of attributes and is the abode of infinite beauty, bliss, and tenderness. He is essentially gracious to His devotees and out of compassion grants them His vision. Says Nimbārka: "The Lord has assumed a form for the sake of being easily meditated upon in response to the wishes of the devotees." Brahman is shaktimān, the possessor of power, and chit and achit are His two powers.

The essential nature of the chit or jiva, the individual soul, is intelligence. The soul is fundamentally a self-conscious ego and continues to be so even in the liberated state. It is a knower, a doer, and an enjoyer,

but its actions and experiences are under God's control. It is eternal and retains these characteristics eternally as well. Souls are atomic in size and infinite in number. There are two kinds of soul, souls in bondage and freed souls (baddha and mukta). The bound souls may be karmins (doers of action), either virtuous or sinful, or jnānins (knowers), and these two have different destinies after death. The soul is related to Brahman, being both different and non-different from Him. Brahman is the controller, the whole, the worshipped, the object to be known and attained; the soul is the controlled, the part, the worshipper, the knower, and the attainer. So there is an inherent (svābhāvika) difference (bheda) between the two. But the souls are also non-different (abheda) from Him, for the effect or part is non-distinct from the cause or whole.

The achit or jagat, the universe, is made up of primal matter, non-primal matter, and time. The universe is the kārya, effect, of Brahman, who is the kārana, source. Brahman is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe. Between Brahman and the world there is a natural and qualitative difference: Brahman is conscious, subtle, non-material, and pure, while the world is the opposite; it is unconscious, gross, material, and impure. Hence there is a natural, inherent difference between the two. Yet again, their identity is also equally true, because they are related as cause and effect.

Thus, the relation between Brahman on the one hand and the souls and the universe on the other is one of inherent difference-and-non-difference. Just as the coiled position of the snake is nothing but the snake, yet different from it; just as the rays of the sun are nothing but the sun, yet different from it; so the souls and the universe, though nothing but Brahman

(Brahmātmaka), are also different from Him because of their own peculiar natures and attributes.[2]

Moksha or salvation, according to Sri Nimbārka, means becoming like the Lord (tad-bhāvāpatti), attaining similarity with Him in nature and qualities. This is possible through the grace of the Lord. It is through the grace of the Lord that a man has an inclination towards salvation. He then approaches the guru and practises sādhanā, which pleases the Lord, who frees him from ignorance. After the accumulated fruits of his actions are exhausted, he has the direct vision of God and attains salvation. Though in salvation the soul realizes its similarity with God, the soul does not attain complete identity with Him. Salvation means realizing the nature of Brahman and realizing one's own nature. Thus, the freed soul realizes itself as non-distinct from Brahman also. However, that non-distinctness is not incompatible with a distinction between itself and Brahman. For, as the relation between the soul and Brahman is one of natural difference-non-difference, salvation is a state of being both similar and distinct from Brahman.[3]

The means to the highest realization, according to Āchārya Nimbārka, are the five sādhanās, called the sādhanā-panchaka. They are karma, vidyā, upāsanā (which includes bhakti), prapatti, and gurupasatti. Karma means doing unselfish work according to the injunctions of the scriptures. Karma gives rise to merit and knowledge. Through merit heaven is attained, while knowledge leads to God. Vidyā means meditative knowledge. Upāsanā or dhyāna consists in meditating on the oneness of the jiva and Brahman or reflecting on Brahman as the Inner Controller. Brahman is also to be meditated upon as the ruler of the universe, or as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, which is other than chit

and achit. Bhakti is intense affection for God manifesting in a particular loving relationship—that of a friend, servant, parent, or lover. It is a superior sādhanā and comes only through the grace of God. For His grace brings humility, which in turn gives rise to bhakti. Bhakti is of two kinds—parā and aparā—bhakti as the goal and bhakti as the means. In the *Dashashloki* Nimbārka emphasizes the fact that Brahman, i.e. Krishna, is to be meditated upon at all times, supreme devotion being the highest sādhanā. And the object of meditation is not Krishna alone, but Rādhā and Krishna conjointly.

Prapatti, or sharanāgati, means complete resignation or self-surrender to the Lord. It is one of the most effective means to salvation. It is depending on the Lord in every respect and at every step, giving up one's identity as a separate, self-dependent, self-sufficient being, giving up all other sādhanās, and throwing one's self completely on the mercy of the Lord. And yet self-surrender does not imply complete inactivity, for one must exert oneself according to the wishes of God. One who wants to attain salvation through this sādhanā should, after having received instructions from a preceptor, take refuge in the Lord with his whole mind and body, looking upon Him as his father, mother, friend, and master, as his knowledge, wealth, and everything, serving Him as a son serves his father, a friend his friend, a servant his master.

Self-surrender to God has six factors—(1) bearing good-will toward all; (2) absence of ill-will; (3) faith that the Lord will protect; (4) acceptance of Him as the saviour; (5) a sense of one's own helplessness; and (6) self-surrender to the Lord. The last is the main factor (angin) while the others are its elements (angas).[4]

Gurūpasatti is complete self-surrender to the guru, who is the intermediary between the jiva and Ishvara. The three letters (a, u, m) of the bija mantra Aum stand for Hari, guru, and jiva. So also do the three letters of the bija mantra of Sri Krishna, Klim. As the clarified butter is first put in the sacrificial ladle and then offered to the sacred fire, so also the individual soul first surrenders to the preceptor, who leads him to God. These five sādhanās are not mutually exclusive. Each is instinct with bhakti and they mutually involve one another.[5]

Auxiliaries to the above sādhanās are broadly five: shraddhā, ārjava, vishvāsa. satsanga, and virāga. Shraddhā means reverently accepting as true what is taught by the scriptures and the spiritual teacher. Ārjava is guilelessness and perfect harmony between mind, speech, and body. Vishvāsa is the faith that the Lord is sure to make the devotee His own. Satsanga is keeping the company of good people, associating with them and serving them. Good people are those who regard everything other than the Lord as utterly negligible and who implicitly follow the Lord's commands. The mere sight of such good men, it is said, is enough to bring about salvation, not to speak of associating with them. And they are to be served more devotedly even than the Lord. Finally, virāga is the absence of both attraction (rāga) and aversion (dvesha) to objects of the senses. Detachment should not be a momentary thing, inspired by an immediate circumstance. Nirhetuka virāga, or causeless detachment is the genuine distaste for the world which rises through the grace of the Lord. As it is based on discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal, it leads to liberation.[6]

The obstacles which prevent one from reaching salva-

tion are of two kinds. The "special" obstacles to salvation have to do with imperfect or wrong knowledge about the nature of the self and of Brahman, or confusion regarding the spiritual means and the end. The "general" obstacles involve not complying with the commands of the Lord mentioned in the scriptures.

Dr. Romā Bose admirably summarized spiritual practice and realization as explained by Nimbārka by listing the sādhanās in the following order of progress: (1) Karma, which purifies the mind and makes it fit for knowledge and meditation; (2) Gurupasatti, or approach to a sad-guru; (3) Jnāna, or attainment of knowledge from the guru, which generates love and leads to (4) Dhyāna or Upāsanā, meditation on Brahman, which leads to (5) Prapatti, which generates (6) Bhakti, which brings (7) the grace of the Lord—and this brings about (8) Sākshātkāra and samyoga, the vision of God and contact with Him, which is moksha or salvation. Finally, the sādhanās are to be practised constantly, till the goal is reached.[7]

In the course of discussing the views of the later followers of Nimbārka, Dr. Bose gives the steps of sādhanā prescribed by them. According to Devāchārya sādhanā is composed of gurupasatti, shravana, manana, nididhyāsana, Bhagavat-prasāda, and sākshātkāra or moksha. Harivyāsadeva speaks of satsanga, dainya and garvahāni, shraddhā and prapatti-pravritti, shravana, etc., Bhagavadanugraha, prapatti, bhakti, and mukti.[8] Purushottamāchārya describes the sādhanās of karma, jnāna, bhakti and gurvanuvritti. Keshava Kashmiri gives eight successive steps to realization: humility, contentment, service, grace, holy company, distaste for unrighteous activity, attraction to Krishna, and lastly bhakti with loving devotion (prema).[9]

In the ninth shloka[10] of the *Dashashloki*, Āchārya Nimbārka speaks of bhakti as the means and the goal. Sri Krishna bestows His grace on a man who is endowed with humility and other good qualities, and through this grace, devotion charged with prema dawns. The path of bhakti can be divided into three types of spiritual discipline—thinking of the world as chit, as Brahman, thinking of the soul, jiva, as Brahman, and contemplating on Brahman as beyond both chit and achit. With the first two meditations the mind of the spiritual aspirant is purified, and by the third, one-pointedness with regard to Brahman develops. This has been called parābhakti, supreme devotion, in the devotional scriptures, and through parābhakti Brahman is realized.

Āchārya Nimbārka's sampradāya was divided into two main sects: the Virakta sect founded by Keshava Bhatta in the 16th century and the Grihastha sect founded by Harivyāsa. There are two other minor sects also, called Haridāsi and Harivyāsi. The main centre for the Nimbārka sect is said to be in Dhruvakshetra in Mathurā There are Nimbārka groups, or duārās, in north and western India, and many followers in Bengal also. They use a rosary of tulasi beads and put tilaka, marks of gopichandana on their foreheads and elsewhere on the body. Nimbārka's sect is noted for its devotion and service to God and the practice of austerity for His sake, which may fruitfully be emulated by all spiritual aspirants.

NOTES

1. उपास्यरूपं तदुपासकस्य च
   कृपाफलं भक्तिरसस्ततः परम् ।
   विरोधिनो रूपमथैतदाप्तेः
   ज्ञेया इमेऽर्था अपि पंच साधुभिः ॥ *Daśaśloki* 10.
2. Romā Bose: *Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha* of Nimbārka, Vol. III, p. 42.
3. cf. *ibid*, p. 44.
4. cf. *ibid*, p. 54.
5. cf. *ibid*, pp. 55–56.
6. cf. *ibid*, p. 58.
7. cf. *ibid*, pp. 62–63.
8. *Ibid*, pp. 115 & 139.
9. आदौ दैन्यं हि सन्तोषः परिचर्या ततः परम् ।
   ततः कृपा च सत्संगोऽप्यसद्धर्मारुचिस्ततः ॥
   कृष्णे रतिस्ततो भक्तिर्या प्रोक्ता प्रेमलक्षणा ।
   प्रादुर्भावे भवेदस्याः साधकानाम् अयं क्रमः ॥
   Sri Nimbārkācārya (p. 83) by Pulin Bihāri Bhattācharya.
10. कृपास्य दैन्यादियुजि प्रजायते
    यथा भवेत् प्रेमविशेषलक्षणा ।
    भक्तिर्ह्यनन्याधिपतेर्महात्मनः
    सा चोत्तमा साधनरूपिकाऽपरा ॥ *Daśaśloki* 9.

16

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND VALLABHA

Among the theistic schools which are based on the Vedāntic scriptures, Vallabhāchārya's Brahmavāda or Shuddhādvaita has a great hold over the people of western India, especially in Gujarāt and Rājasthān. Āchārya Vallabha was born in 1481 (some say 1479) near Vārānasi, the son of Lakshmana Bhatta who was a Telugu Brahmin from Rāipur. He studied the Vedas under several teachers of the Madhva sect, primarily under Madhva-yatindra, but he developed a religious system of his own, though he was also greatly influenced by Vishnuswāmi, another great Vaishnava teacher. According to the *Padmapurāna*,[1] there are four sampradāyas, or sects of Vaishnavism—Brahmā, Sanaka, Shri, and Rudra. The last was the sampradāya of Vishnuswāmi, whose ideas greatly influenced Vallabha's thinking. Madhva, Nimbārka, and Rāmānuja were the teachers of the others. The later Vaishnava sects fitted themselves into one or another of the main sects. The Chaitanya school often owes allegiance to the Madhva sect and Vallabha's school to the Rudra sampradāya.

When he was young, Āchārya Vallabha took part successfully in a philosophical debate, which took place in Vijayanagara over the determinate nature of Brahman, and became very famous. Vallabha was also a much-travelled man and went round the whole country several times. He was a householder but became a monk at the very end of his life, assuming the name of Purnānanda. He met both Vyāsatirtha and Sri Chai-

tanya and became very intimate with the latter, whose system of thought has much affinity with his own He passed away in 1533 (or 1511), leaving behind two sons named Gopināth and Vitthalanāth. The latter made a very great contribution to the development of the sect founded by his father.

Āchārya Vallabha was a prolific writer. It is said that he wrote eighty-four books, though all of them are not extant. The most important are his commentaries on the *Bhāgavata* and the *Brahma-sutra* and his own *Tattva Dipa*. These works are known respectively as *Subodhini*, *Anubhāshya* and *Prakāsha*. The number 84 has since assumed a special, holy significance in the Vallabha sect. Hence this sect holds that there are 84 books by Vallabha, he had 84 main disciples, having their 84 messages, vārtās; there are eighty-four baithaks, places hallowed by him, and 84 types of devotion. Of the eighty-four books, sixteen of them, the Shaudāsha-grantha, are small works dealing with various problems of metaphysics and the conduct of life, and they are given a very honoured place by Vallabha's followers

Shuddhādvaita or Pure Nondualism

The philosophical system set forth by Vallabha is known as Brahmādvaita or Shuddhādvaita (*Anubhāshya* 1.4.28), distinct from the Kevalādvaita of Sri Shankarāchārya. According to Vallabha, God is the Absolute, the Perfect Person. He is Satchidānanda, Absolute Being, Knowledge, and Joy. He has qualities, though not ordinary ones. The relation between Brahman on the one hand and the jiva and jada (the individual soul and matter) on the other, is one of pure identity, as is the relation of the whole to the part. Brahman creates the world without the help of any second entity. Brahman

is personified as Krishna (*Anubhāshya* 3.2.24). He is the creator of the world and, being transcendent, has no need for a physical body; but out of His grace, for the sake of the devotee, He assumes various forms. Brahman becomes whatever He wills by the evolution and involution (āvirbhāva and tirobhāva) of His qualities. The God of wisdom and the God of action can be reached through jnāna and karma respectively, but the God of love can be attained by love alone, which again comes to the devotee through His grace.

The jiva, according to Āchārya Vallabha, is atomic in size, is one with Brahman, and constitutes a part of Brahman. When the quality of ānanda in Brahman is obscured, and only sat and chit remain manifest, we have the jiva, which though a manifestation of Brahman is as real and eternal as Brahman. There are three kinds of jivas. The divine qualities of the shuddha, or pure jivas shine forth and are not obscured by ignorance. The samsārin or mundane jivas are under the spell of ignorance and undergo repeated birth and death in this samsāra (world), and have both gross and subtle bodies. The mukta or liberated jivas are the souls who have been freed from the bondage of birth and death through realization. In the state of liberation, the suppressed qualities of the soul are revealed and it becomes one with God. The liberated souls also are of different kinds according to their preponderant attitudes toward God.

The inanimate world is also Brahmātmaka, filled with Brahman. The quality of chit as well as ānanda is suppressed, and what remains is pure sattva or sat. The world is thus Brahma-kārya, the effect of Brahman.[2] Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of

the world. The world, like the jiva, is as real and eternal as Brahman. It is however sometimes manifested and sometimes unmanifested.

Vallabha differentiates between māyā and samsāra (*Anubhāshya* 1.1.3). While the former is real, the latter is unreal. The material world, jagat, being God Himself in a limited form, is a theatre for the lilā of God. Samsāra is the world of false relations which is created by the soul and which alone is unreal.

Concept of Bhakti

Sri Vallabha regards bhakti as the chief means for attaining mukti. Bhakti is defined as firm and overwhelming affection for God with a full awareness of His greatness. And yet, although bhakti is the means of sādhanā and mukti is the goal, the sādhanā stage is more valued. Vallabha says that enjoying God with all one's senses is better than the state of jivanmukti, even though the devotee may be an ordinary householder. In fact, Vallabha does not place any stress on renunciation or self-mortification, for he regards the body as the temple of God. The highest goal is not simply mukti, but eternal sevā, service of Krishna, and participation in His sports in the celestial Vrindāvana.

According to the Āchārya, by listening to the reading of the scriptures a man is freed from sins. Through knowledge one thinks of God as all and of oneself as emanating from Him. Through love one serves Him. If he has only knowledge or only love he is a lesser devotee, whereas a good devotee has both knowledge and love. The mind of the best kind of devotee is filled with Krishna alone. Devotion rises sometimes spontaneously, sometimes through association with other

devotees, or sometimes by following favourable spiritual practices. Yet ultimately, devotion to Krishna comes only through His grace.

Anurakti or rāga is the greatest degree of attachment to the object of worship associated with pleasure. Such natural and spontaneous attachment to God is Bhakti. Bhakti is the will to love. Action and knowledge and faith help in the growth of attachment of God, but bhakti is not a kind of knowledge or faith or action or worship. It is the yearning which never ceases in spite of many difficulties and dangers. It has also been defined as an unspeakable, loving desire for a particular object. Bhakti (bhaj + ktin) means the activity of bhaj, that is, sevā or service. Sevā is a physical activity, but it is coupled with sneha, affection or love. One of the characteristics of bhakti is that one has knowledge of God as dwelling in all things, for they are all His manifestations. But as affection is the predominant factor in sevā, the final result of sevā is not knowledge but bhakti, knowledge being only an anga or part of bhakti. There are various obstacles to bhakti, but one who tries to enjoy the blessed nature of God easily overcomes the impediments.

The principal means by which devotion is attained through the grace of God is purity of heart. There are sixteen means for attaining this purity—ablutions, sacrifices, image-worship, meditation on God in all things, development of a sāttvic mind, giving up the fruits of one's karma and attachment to things of the world, reverence for the revered, kindness to the poor, regard for all beings as equals and friends, yamas (disciplines for internal purification), niyama (disciplines for external purity), listening to the reading of scriptures,

listening to and chanting God's name, sincerity, holy company, and absence of egoism.

Bhakti is sometimes said to be sādhanarupā (bhakti of sādhanā) and sādhyarupā (bhakti of realization). These again may be of 81 kinds, corresponding to that many different kinds of qualities. Bhakti may be practised as part of knowledge or as directly leading to emancipation. Bhakti as part of knowledge has been divided into saguna and nirguna, saguna again into jnānamishrā, vairāgyamishrā and karmamishrā. These also have still finer distinctions. Nirguna bhakti is of three kinds—love, attachment, and passion for God. Thus saguna and nirguna together make 84 kinds of Bhakti.[3]

The ideal types of devotees are those who practise dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya, or sringāra (mādhurya) bhakti, that is, regarding Krishna in an intimate relationship as their master, friend, child, or lover. Though bhakti is itself the goal of all sādhanā, there are other fruits too, namely, supernatural powers and salvation. The four kinds of mukti or salvation are sāyujya, sālokya, sārupya, sāmipya—association or absorption in God, residing in the same region with Him, having similar form to Him, and closeness to Him. Vallabha speaks also of having a suitable body after liberation for serving God.

Pushti Mārga or the Way of Grace

The most original part of Vallabha's teachings is the way of life and salvation preached by him known as Pushti-mārga or the Way of Grace. The word pushti, which means stoutness or strength, is derived from the word poshana, nourishment, used first in connection

with God's grace in the *Bhāgavata*.[4] The soul of man is weak and lean owing to sin; only through the grace of God can it be nourished. So the grace of God is even more important than bhakti. In the *Tattvārtha-dipa-nibandha*, Vallabha defines pushti as the nature of God in the form of grace.[5]

There are, according to him, three kinds of human souls—pushti, maryādā, and prāvāhika.[6] These are different from one another in their origin, nature, and final end. The pushti souls are the best, those who continually experience God's grace; the maryādā souls follow the injunctions of the scriptures and, at the end, become absorbed in the akshara, the outer body of God; the prāvāhika souls, those immersed in worldliness, remain in this samsāra. Vallabha points out that these three natures are often mixed in different proportions in human souls. There are three main types of sādhanā, suitable to the three types of souls—pushti, maryādā, and prāvāha. Only the first two are real devotion. Maryādā bhakti is nothing but vaidhi bhakti, that is, following the Vedic injunctions. Pushti bhakti is the same as the rāgānugā bhakti of the Chaitanya school, as Sri Rupa Goswāmi has pointed out in his *Bhakti-rasāmrita-sindhu*.[7]

In maryādā bhakti sādhanā is accepted as a necessity, but in pushti bhakti, grace is the only thing necessary.[8] Pushti bhakti is of four kinds.[9] Prāvāha-pushti directs men following scriptural injunctions towards hearing about God. Pushti-pushti is for those who have the proper knowledge of their relation to God. Shuddha-pushti is full of love for God. It is the rarest and best form of bhakti. Sādhanā is a combination of God's grace and following scriptural law, varying from individual to individual according to the varied tem-

peraments. All souls are divine in origin, but the play of God is such that they are born with different natures. The purpose of this is that they will seek out and enjoy the bliss of communion with God again.

Sri Vallabha accepts the nine kinds of devotion mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*, hearing about God, praising Him, remembering Him, worshipping His feet, ceremonial worship, bowing down to Him, personal service to Him, friendship with Him and absolute surrender to Him. However, Vallabha stressed the last three.

In Vallabha's view, the aspirant's only duty is to surrender totally to God,[10] of whom he is a part. The entrance into the path of grace is called Brahma-sambandha, having a relationship with God. The mantra, *Sri Krishnah sharanam mama*, given to the devotee, means "Sri Krishna is my refuge", thus emphasizing surrender. Self-surrender is the highest form of bhakti. It is the best sevā or service to God. It is both the means and the end. Again it is said to be the goal as distinct from the means. The truest bhakti is prema-lakshana-bhakti, bhakti chiefly characterized by love. It is the spontaneous flow of love from the heart corresponding to the spontaneous flowing of the grace of God. Though this bhakti is the mānasi or mental sevā, the sevā is normally centred round an image of Sri Krishna, regarded as God Himself. This is supported by Vallabha's Brahmavāda philosophy, which recognizes everything as a manifestation of God, the images being so to a greater degree. Moreover, regular, loving service to the Divine Image increases the Presence in the Image.

Divine Service or Sevā

Divine worship is a very important feature of Vallabha's system. There are no temples as such, but there

are hāvelis or houses of God where regular sevā is carried on. Sevā stresses personal love and service to svarupas, the forms of God. The eightfold service prescribed by Vallabha consists of worshipping Sri Krishna in the different moods, and activities of His life in Vrindāvana—awaking in the morning, dressing, going to the meadows with the cows, lunch, awaking from mid-day nap, tiffin, coming back from the meadow, and retiring to bed. Devotees have darshana (viewing of the Lord) at those hours, and that in itself is considered sādhanā. The rest of the time is regarded as being passed in viraha or separation. In fact, the entire life of a devotee is made up of alternating separation and union with God. Private worship is also done in every house, and there the vātsalya sevā (regarding Krishna as the Divine Child) is generally given more prominence. Sri Vallabha speaks of Krishna tended by Mother Yashodā as being the Ishta or Chosen Deity of his sect Cooking, decorating the images, music and composing songs are some of the fields which have been greatly developed through this elaborate sevā of the Vallabha sect.

The love for God grows in stages, from attachment to addiction to finally seeing God in oneself and in others (āsakti, vyāsana, and sarvātma-bhāva). Then the devotee becomes united with his Beloved. This is absorption in God, but of a kind in which there is room for the eternal rhythm of separation and union.

NOTES

1. रामानुजं श्रीःस्वीचक्रे मध्वाचार्यं चतुर्मुखः ।
   श्रीविष्णुस्वामिनं रुद्रो निम्बादित्यं चतुस्सनः ॥
2. तस्माद् ब्रह्मपरिणामलक्षणं कार्यमित्ति जगत् । *Anubhashya*, 7. 5. 26.
3. cf. Das Gupta: *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV, p. 353.
4. पोषणं तदनुग्रहः । 2. 10. 24.
5. अनुग्रहरूपो भगवद्धर्मः पुष्टिः ।
6. cf. Parekh: *Sri Vallabhacharya*, p. 229.
7. शास्त्रोक्तया प्रबलया तत्तमार्यादयान्विता ।
   बैधी भक्तिरियं कैश्चिन्मर्यादामार्ग उच्यते ॥
   कृष्णतद्भक्तकारुण्यमात्रलाभैकहेतुका ।
   पुष्टिमार्गतया कैश्चिदियं रागानुगोच्यते ॥ 1–2, 269 & 369.
8. (i) पुष्टिमार्गोऽनुग्रहैकसाध्यः । *Anubhashya* 4. 4. 9.
   (ii) साधनं विना स्वस्वरूपबलेनैव कार्यकरणे हि पुष्टिः । 4. 1. 13.
   (iii) साधनक्रमेण मोचनेच्छा हि मर्यादामार्गीया मर्यादा ।
   विहितसाधनं विनैव मोचनेच्छा पुष्टिमार्गमर्यादा । 4. 2. 7.
9. सा पुष्टिभक्तिश्चतुर्धा-प्रवाहपुष्टिभक्ति-मर्यादापुष्टिभक्ति-पुष्टिपुष्टिभक्ति-शुद्धपुष्टिभक्तिभेदात् । *Pushtiviveka.*
10. पुष्टिमार्गे वरणमेव साधनम् ।

17

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND CHAITANYA

Mahāprabhu Sri Chaitanya, born in Bengal in the eighties of the fifteenth century, was the founder of Bengal Vaishnavism. Though he was known as a great scholar in the earlier part of his life, he did not write any philosophical treatises. But in his eight "instructing verses" he expressed his views, and later followers of his school developed his ideas into a philosophy. Sri Chaitanya's life, especially the last part which he spent in Puri, was one of frequent ecstasies, experiencing the rapturous joy of union with Sri Krishna or excruciating pangs of separation from Him, as Rādhā had experienced in Vrindāvana. Among the devotional and philosophical writers of his school, Goswāmis Rupa, Sanātana, Jiva, Gopāla Bhatta, Krishnadāsa Kavirāja, and later Baladeva Vidyābhushana and Visvanātha Chakravarti are well-known.

According to Sri Chaitanya, Hari or God is one without a second. He has infinite powers and is the ocean of spiritual feelings. The individual souls, who are his parts, are under the spell of prakriti, His illusory power. Yet some are released from prakriti through their devotion, which in overflowing measure is the goal of life. Sri Chaitanya's philosophy is known as Achintya-bhedābheda-vāda, holding to the principle of an incomprehensible difference-yet-non-difference between God and creation. In this school, the universe is regarded as a manifestation of God. It can neither be said to be different from, nor identical with Him Like-

wise, the jiva is simultaneously distinct from and identical with God. By Brahman is meant nothing but Sri Krishna, who has an eternal, non-material human form. He attracts every individual soul by His charms and hence is called Krishna. Sri Krishna and His manifestations have their heavens or abodes wherein they perform their divine sports. The abode of Sri Krishna is called Vrindāvana, Vraja, or Gokula. The abode of Nārāyana is known as Vaikuntha, where devotees worshipping God as endowed with divine powers go. The devotees identify themselves with the associates of Krishna according to the degree of development of love for Him, and they are classed as loving servants, comrades, parents, or beloved youthful maids of Krishna.

The followers of Sri Chaitanya regard him as the aspect of Krishna in which all the attributes of the Krishna of Vrindāvana as well as those of Rādhā coexist. Hence the life and lilā of Sri Chaitanya are sung and meditated upon as is the life and lilā of Sri Krishna.

The goal of life is the attainment of God or service to Sri Krishna in His eternal abode, for the individual being in his true essence is an eternal companion of Sri Krishna. In this life itself one's identification with the companions of Sri Krishna is to be realized through sādhanā. This can be done by constant remembrance of Krishna, which alone is the essence of all devotional exercises.

Jiva Goswāmi points out in his *Shatsandarbha* that abhideya, the means, is worship and service of Sri Krishna, the ultimate reality. It is characterized by constant thinking and worship of the Lord. Worship (upāsanā) is of two types, direct and indirect. Indirect worship consists in surrendering the fruits of one's actions to God. Direct worship can be done in three ways.

Through the path of jnāna or knowledge, nirguna Brahman, Brahman without attributes, is contemplated upon. In Chaitanya's school nirguna is considered a quality of the ultimate Reality. Through the path of yoga or worship of particular deities also, worship or contemplation may be done. The third method is that of Bhakti, devotion to Sri Krishna, who is the full manifestation of the supreme Reality. Bhakti is threefold in nature. It may be merely external (āropa-siddhā), or due to association with other devotees (sanga-siddhā), or due to a sincere feeling of innate affection for God (svarupa-siddhā).[1] The first two are preliminary, while the last is considered real (akitava). This last form of bhakti, again, is of two kinds, vaidhi and rāgānugā. Vaidhi-bhakti leads a man to devote himself to God and to do worship without ulterior motive. It is called vaidhi because the prompting to the course of bhakti comes from scriptural sources (otherwise called vidhi, scriptural injunctions). Vaidhi-bhakti may take various forms, such as seeking protection (sharanāpatti), association with good teachers and devotees, listening to God's name, and reciting His name and glories. Of these, sharanāpatti is the most important. In *Haribhaktivilāsa* sharanāpatti has been defined as consisting of the following elements: (i) to think and act always in a manner agreeable to God; (ii) to desist from anything that may in any way displease God; (iii) to have strong faith that He will protect one; (iv) to cling to Him for protection; (v) to throw oneself entirely into God's hands and consider oneself entirely dependent on Him; and (vi) to consider oneself a very humble being waiting for the grace of God to descend on him.[2] With the development of a genuine attraction to God through practising sādhanā

as prescribed in the scriptures, Sri Krishna becomes the object of a spiritual emotional relationship on the part of the aspirant, through which he attains his highest realization. These emotions towards Krishna are five in number—those of the contemplative, servant, comrade, parent, and lover.

A feeling of love for Krishna is cultivated through nine aspects of bhakti. They consist of whole-souled contemplation and service of God. These steps to bhakti are narrated in the *Bhāgavata* thus:

(1) Hearing the names of God chanted or sung by others, or songs in praise of Krishna, or the narration of His charms, pastimes, attributes, etc. (2) Chanting or singing His names, narrating or singing of His charms, etc. (3) Remembering or thinking of His names, charms, etc. (4) Showing respect to Krishna by visiting the sacred places associated with His pastimes, serving and keeping company with His devotees, showing respect to things connected with remembrance of Him, etc. (5) Worship of Krishna in images by offering flowers, sandal paste, food, etc. (6) Bowing down before Krishna or His images at the place of worship. (7) Serving Krishna in the attitude of a devoted servant. (8) Comradeship—thinking that one is His loving and intimate friend, and behaving towards Him accordingly, generally centring this relationship around an image of Him. (9) Resignation to Krishna—devoting oneself entirely to His service.[3]

Rupa Goswāmi recognizes sixty-four forms of devotional sādhanā. Of these, the five main ones are associating with devotees, singing God's divine name, hearing the scriptures, staying in holy places, and serving the deity with devotion. Another saying speaks of three important sādhanās—kindness to beings, taste for the

name of God, and service to devotees. The *Chaitanya Charitāmrita* considers chanting of the divine name to be the best form of devotion. For the best results, God's name must be repeated with a feeling of love. Name must be distinguished from its 'semblance'. One must be ethically perfect and devotionally advanced to do so. Rupa Goswāmi speaks of the best type of bhakti as being free from other desires as well as free from knowledge and action, and being concerned only with the thought and service of God. 'Bhakti consists of a loving relationship with Krishna for His satisfaction alone, without being in any way influenced by the desire for philosophic knowledge, by karma, by disinclination for worldly things, or by any desire for one's own interests.'[4]

Rupa Goswāmi in his *Upadeshāmrita* speaks of helps and hindrances to the development of devotion. The six obstacles to bhakti are over-eating, over-exertion, unnecessary conversation, anxiety for too many rules, the company of people, and restlessness.[5] The six helps for its development are enthusiasm, conviction, patience, suitable actions, detachment, and good conduct.[6]

The fine distinctions of the development of devotion leading to love for God as His sweetheart are found in a conversation between Rāy Rāmānanda and Sri Chaitanya. First comes religious life in a general sense, conforming to the varnāshrama dharma, religious life as prescribed in the scriptures. Then come in succession devotion mixed with action, self-surrender, devotion mixed with knowledge, devotion pure and simple, and the loving devotion. Next comes the loving relationship of the attendant, the friend, and the parent. Last and most intimate is the love of the sweetheart.

According to Bengal Vaishnavism, prema cannot be

achieved through sādhanā; sādhanā only prepares the devotee for the dawning of prema. The different steps of preparation are enumerated thus: First faith is needed, then the company of holy men, next bhajana, repeating and singing the name of God, as a result of which obstacles are destroyed. Then arise nishthā and ruchi, one-pointed devotion and taste for the divine name. Then comes attachment for God. Up to this point is within the domain of sādhanā. Next comes bhāva, feeling for God. Last of all dawns prema.[7]

From the sprout of love issue forth addiction and emotion, rati and bhāva for God. The outward indications of the development of rati are as follows: (1) Forbearance, or perfect indifference to even irreparable loss or unexpected gain in worldly affairs. (2) The utilization of every second of time in religious practices, considering every moment spent otherwise as wasted. (3) Freedom from worldly attachment. (4) Lack of desire for public esteem and feeling oneself to be the worst of all, even though one may in fact be the best. (5) Firm belief that Krishna will be merciful. (6) Ardent longing for union with God. (7) Great liking for always chanting the name of Hari. (8) Desire to talk about attributes of God. (9) Great liking for His abode or His temples or for the places of His manifest lilā.

Rati, however, ripens into what is technically called prema. Prema completely softens the heart and is marked by an attitude of 'mineness'; that is, with a feeling that Krishna belongs to the devotee, and to no one else. Chanting the favourite names of the beloved Lord with a completely softened heart, one endowed with prema laughs, cries, sings, and dances just like a mad man, quite indifferent to the presence of other persons. One possessing prema will, after death, go to

a place where the lilā of Krishna is eternally going on.

Prema ripens into sneha. With the advent of sneha, so intense becomes the idea of 'mineness' that the devotee is not satisfied with the mere sight of Krishna, the sound of his voice, and so on. Sneha in turn ripens into māna in which, by the peculiar nature of intense love, the devotee, on account of a real or fancied grievance, conceals his or her feeling of love and shows jealous anger or petulance toward the Beloved Krishna. Māna deepens into pranaya, which inspires greater confidence in the Lord and dispels all sense of fear and awe, thus producing a sense of equality of the subject with the object. Pranaya ripens into rāga, which manifests as excessive eagerness for union with Krishna. Rāga develops into anurāga, in which the object of love, even though realized and relished always, appears to be clothed with fresh charms and attractiveness every moment. This indicates an insatiable eagerness for experiencing the charms of Krishna. Anurāga culminates in mahā-bhāva or supreme love.[8] Mahā-bhāva cannot be achieved by ordinary souls; it is the domain of divine incarnations. The perfect manifestation of this mahā-bhāva was Sri Rādhā of Vrindāvana, and Sri Chaitanya also attained this ultimate state of realization. Sri Rāmakrishna said about him:

> Bhakti matured becomes bhāva. Next is mahā-bhāva, then prema, and last of all is the attainment of God. Gaurānga (Chaitanya) experienced the states of mahā-bhāva and prema. When prema is awakened, a devotee completely forgets the world; he also forgets his body, which is so dear to a man. Gaurānga experienced prema. He jumped into the ocean, thinking it to be the Jamunā. The ordinary

> jiva does not experience mahā-bhāva or prema. He goes only as far as bhāva. But Gaurānga experienced all three states. In the inmost state he would remain in samādhi, unconscious of the outer world. In the semi-conscious state he chanted the name of God.[9]

Having attained this intimate realization, Sri Chaitanya lived in Puri for many years, transforming the lives of many both in his lifetime and after. The method of sādhanā which he lived and taught is essentially one of love and service to God in the form of Sri Krishna often together with His divine consort, Rādhā.

NOTES

1. cf. *Achintyabhedabhedavada* by S. Vidyavinoda, p. 284.

2. आनुकूलस्य संकल्पः प्रातिकूलस्य वर्जनम् ।
   रक्षिष्यतीति विश्वासो गोप्तृत्वे वरणं तथा ।
   आत्मनिक्षेपकार्पण्ये षड्विधा शरणागतिः ॥
   (cf. Das Gupta's *A History of Indian Philosophy* IV, p. 245).

3. cf. *Cultural Heritage of India* IV, p. 194.

4. अन्याभिलाषिताशून्यं ज्ञानकर्माद्यनावृतम् ।
   आनुकूल्येन कृष्णानुशीलनं भक्तिरुत्तमा ॥
   Bhaktirasamritasindhu 1. 1. 9.

5. अत्याहारः प्रयासश्च प्रजल्पो नियमाग्रहः ।
   जनसंगश्च लौल्यं च षड्भिर्भक्तिर्विनश्यति ॥

6. उत्साहान्निश्चयाद्धैर्यात् तत्तत् कर्मप्रवर्त्तनात् ।
   संगत्यागात् सतोवृत्तेः षड्भिर्भक्तिः प्रसिध्यति ॥

7. आदौ श्रद्धा ततः साधुसंगोऽथ भजनक्रिया ।
   ततोऽनर्थनिवृत्तिः स्यात् ततो निष्ठा रुचिस्ततः ॥

अथासक्तिस्ततोभावस्ततः प्रेमाभ्युदंचति ।
साधकानामयं प्रेम्णः प्रादुर्भावे भवेत् क्रमः ॥

8. cf. *Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, p. 196–197.
9. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 179.

18

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND SHRIKANTHA

Shaivāchārya Shrikantha is the philosopher of the the shaiva sect of the South. He was known also as Nilakantha. He lived some time after Āchārya Shankara. His philosophy is similar to the Vishishtādvaita of Āchārya Rāmānuja, except that Rāmānuja regards Vishnu as the Supreme Deity, and Shrikantha accepts Shiva.

There is controversy about the date of Shrikantha's lifetime. S. S. Suryanārāyana Sāstri in his *Sivādvaita of Srikantha* prefers to consider him a contemporary of Rāmānuja. As his philosophy is very similar to the Vishishtādvaita of Rāmānuja, it is sometimes called Shiva-Vishishtādvaita or Vishishta-Shivādvaita. It is also called Shiva-Advaita, being very similar to Advaita. The noted authority, Appayya Dikshita, takes this view and considers Shrikantha to have lived before Rāmānuja. Sāstri, by choosing the above title for his book, seems to favour this view.

Āchārya Shrikantha is best known among the philosophers of Shaiva Siddhānta because of his commentary on the *Brahma-sutras*. There were other saints and philosophers of this school, of course, such as the four Samayāchāras and Tirumulār, Sekkilār, Meykandar, Ārulnandi, and Umāpati. But most of them wrote in Tāmil, whereas Shrikantha wrote in Sanskrit, which was more widespread. Shrikantha considered the Veda and the Āgama as the same. He said: 'I do not perceive any difference between the Veda and the Shivāgama.'[1]

Nevertheless, he felt the necessity of writing a commentary on the *Brahma-sutras* to ensure a place for his philosophical view among the orthodox Vedāntic systems. His commentary follows the philosophy of Shvetāchārya, also known as Meykandar, who wrote the *Shiva-jnāna-bodham*, an exposition of the *Raurava Āgama* of twelve verses.

Though Āchārya Shrikantha is accepted by the Southern Shaiva school as their commentator, some differences are found between his views and those of the Tāmil Shaiva Siddhānta. The Siddhāntin's conception of anava or the power that obscures, Shrikantha's idea of the Lord as the material and efficient cause of the universe, his basic view of existence as Tādātmyam (substance and its attribute) as opposed to the Siddhāntin's concept of Advaita (oneness), Shrikantha's idea of the jiva's anutva or atomic nature and the Siddhāntin's recognition of Jivanmukti, the Siddhāntin's emphasis on the importance of reason as opposed to Shrikantha's upholding of Shruti (scripture) alone: these are some of the points of difference. The later commentators of the school, however, have tried to harmonize the two views.[2]

According to Shrikantha, Brahman, the highest reality, is Shiva. Release can come about by the contemplation of Him, "who is eternally free from bonds, Shiva, the blue-throated consort of Umā, the Supreme Lord, the noble Being, the Three-eyed God, by meditating on whom the sages attain to the First Cause, the witness of all, beyond the utmost darkness."[3] He is called Shiva because He is free from all taints and is supremely auspicious. As He exists everywhere at all times, He is called Bhava. He is known as Sharva as He is the destroyer of everything, Pashupati as he is the ruler of

the pashus or jivas, Mahādeva as He enjoys supreme bliss, and Rudra because He removes the miseries of the world. Shiva is the Supreme Cause from which everything arises. He is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe and not merely the efficient cause, as some Shaiva sects advocate. As Nārāyana He is the material cause of the universe through His māyā or icchāshakti (special power). Shiva is possessed of an infinite number of attributes and powers, but He is free from all defects. He is both the ruler and the redeemer. The sentient and the insentient are His powers. He is qualified by the universe, as blueness qualifies the lotus, and has the universe for His form or body. Shiva, according to Shrikantha, is not pure knowledge, but is a knower, enjoyer, and agent. He has a non-material body which is not subject to any karma. Shrikantha does not accept the vyuhas (aspects of God) nor the avatāras of Shiva.

The individual soul is an eternal and real substance. It is a knower, and enjoyer, an agent, atomic in nature and everlasting. Moreover, it is an attribute of the Lord. The soul is dependent upon the Lord when in bondage, but when it attains release, it is independent and attains a state of similarity to the Lord.

The world is also real, eternal, and a power of the Lord. Moreover, it is also His attribute. The universe is a real transformation of Shiva, just as the curd is of the milk. And yet, though the Lord is transformed into the universe, He himself remains untransformed and full, just as the genus, though present in each species, is yet itself non-divided.

So, according to Shrikantha, says Dr. Romā Bose,[4] there is an essential difference between the Lord, the individual soul (chit), and inert matter (achit). Shiva

is the director, Lord of the entire universe, the object of worship, and the goal; while chit, the soul, is the worshipper, the attainer, and dependent. It is intelligent but possessed of limited knowledge. Both chit and achit are His effects. That does not mean that there is both difference and non-difference between Brahman and the universe. It is like the relation between the soul and the body, between the substance and its attribute, between the cause and the effect. The one cannot exist without the other. So non-difference only means essential and mutual interdependence and not actual identity. And difference means difference of essential nature. This view of Shrikantha is called the Vishishta-Shivādvaita-vāda. Here, as in Rāmānuja's philosophy, the stress is more on the principle of identity than on that of difference.

Liberation is the severance of the bonds of samsāra, the world, and the attainment of Shivatva, the state of Shiva—becoming similar to Him. Of course, the released soul cannot create, maintain, or destroy the universe, which are powers belonging to God alone. With a non-material body it shares in the divine pleasures of the Lord and perceives His ever-blissful form. Salvation is of two types, immediate and gradual (sadyas and krama). Those who meditate on the Lord in His own nature go to Him directly, while the others will reach him gradually but eventually.

In sādhanā, according to Shrikantha, the study of Brahman must be preceded by the study of dharma. Dharma is the means, Brahman is the goal. Dharma is the proper and disinterested performance of the daily and occasional (nitya and naimityika) duties, such as the performance of sacrifices, etc. The practice of charity, penance, self-control, and other virtues, along

with dharma purify the mind. Thus karma, or action, is essential for knowledge. It is vidyānga and vidyā-sahakārini, both part of and an aid to knowledge. Karma does not lead directly to mukti, salvation. It is only an indirect means to it. Salvation is directly given rise to by knowledge alone. This knowledge according to Shrikantha is nothing but meditation. Knowledge leads to meditation and meditation to salvation. One willing to have salvation should first know the Lord from the scriptures and then meditate on Him.

There are various kinds of meditations (upāsanās or vidyās) leading to different results. While meditating on Brahman for His own sake, and not for lower ends, there is no necessity to combine them. Meditation must be repeated till the last or till the intuition of Brahman, after which it becomes automatic. The upāsanās are of different kinds. Some lead to the Lord directly. Svarupa-upāsanā or kārana-upāsanā is meditation on the Lord as He is in His own nature. Meditation on the supreme nature of the Lord as identical with one's own true nature removes the pashutva or limitations of the soul and Shivatva is attained. Other meditations in the Upanishads, the parā-vidyās, also lead to the Lord directly. But some meditations are an indirect means to the Lord. By meditating on the Lord as the material cause of the universe, i.e. as Nārāyana, one attains Nārāyana first and then the Supreme Lord. Meditation on the Lord as bhoktā and bhogya, the sentient and the non-sentient, also leads to the Lord gradually. There are certain symbolic meditations which do not lead to the Lord at all. There are some practices regarded as auxiliary meditations, such as repetition of Om and wearing sacred ashes. The pāshupāta vrata or atyā-shrama, a special vow, also leads to liberation.

Thus according to Shrikantha, karma leads to jnāna, jnāna to upāsanā, upāsanā to the grace of the Lord, and finally mukti is attained. Salvation is attained through the grace of the Lord because He is the giver of salvation. Just as we see the sun by its rays, so also we see the Lord by the light of His grace. The power and grace of the Lord are to be found specially in divine forms, holy places, sacred waters, the priest or teacher, the holy image, devotees—especially, the renunciates—sacred ashes, and the rosary (murti, sthalam, tirtham, guru, lingam, jangama, vibhuti, and rudrāksha). Āchārya Shrikantha does not specially stress self-surrender as an independent path as do some Vaishnava teachers. The relationship with the Lord is more one of awe and reverence, as in Rāmānuja's religion. The orthodox Siddhāntins speak of four attitudes toward the Lord: the attitude of a servant, a good son, a friend, and the pure, holy attitude (dāsa, satputra, sakhā and sat mārgas).

The scholars may differ about the philosophy of Shrikantha, whether it conforms strictly to the Shiva-Advaita of the Siddhāntins or is Shiva-Vishishtādvaita. But the Shaiva Siddhāntins claim him as one of their āchāryas. Regarding Shrikantha's contribution to Indian religious thought, Prof. Suryanārāyana Sāstri says:

To interpret the *Vedānta Sutras* as teaching a system of theism which had also independent support in the Saiva Agamas, that was the service of Srikantha to Vedantic thought.

Srikantha had the gift to perceive in the *Sutras* a doctrine of the Supreme Being as Siva, the auspicious one, the Being whose throat shows for

all time the mark of His grace to his creatures, the consort of Uma who is the Supreme Light of Intelligence and Bliss, the three-eyed cause of the destruction and the subsequent re-creation of the Universe, the God who is the agent in all action and yet is as but the senior partner in every enterprise (not interfering with the freedom and responsibility of his junior partners), He who bestows Grace on His devotees by conferring on them His own form even in respect of blue-throatedness and so on, He who is supreme but not exclusive, He who grants release earlier or later to all, even those who follow other gods. It is for this vision that Srikantha deserves to be reverenced by all, not for the half-hidden presuppositions or possible developments of his thought.[5]

NOTES

1. *Srikantha Bhashya*, II. 2. 38.
2. cf. Sastri's *Sivādvaita*, pp. 22-27.
3. cf. *Kaivalya Upanishad*, 3.
4. *Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha* of Nimbārka, Vol. III, pp. 201-214.
5. *Sivādvaita*, p. 309.

19

IN THE SCRIPTURES

The goal of life is to realize one's spiritual nature or, in the devotional language, to realize God. To achieve this goal two fundamental means are prescribed. One is the cultivation of moral discipline and acquiring higher virtues. The other is the practice of meditation and thinking of the Lord in various ways. The *Katha Upanishad* (3.3) in its parable of the chariot speaks of the mind as the controller of the senses. Meditation is the method of control and making the mind one-pointed. In the Upanishads meditation has been very much extolled. The ultimate truth is Brahman. One is saved by knowing that Truth. Brahman grants that Knowledge to a person who constantly thinks of it (*Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* 3.8.10, 4.4.14).

The *Gitā* (6.10) speaks about physical conditions of meditation, praises retiring into solitude (5.10), concentrating one's mind (5.12) and thinking of the Lord (5.14). That is the way to peace and liberation (5.16). Intense meditation on God leads to the spiritual vision (9.22). Krishna speaks of Dhyāna yoga and exhorts the aspirant to be ever engaged in meditation (18.57) and assures him of saving him from all dangers (18.58).

The *Bhāgavata* exhorts devotees to practise meditation unceasingly (11.10) and says that the sign of a wise man is that he never ceases to meditate (11.11).

In the Advaita system where discrimination is the special discipline much stress has been given on medi-

tation also. The different vidyās are different types of meditation. Shāndilya vidyā speaks about the identity of the individual and Brahman and seeing God in everything. The Dahara vidyā tells of meditating in the cave of the heart. The Panchāgni vidyā prescribes meditation on the five fires, thus consecrating life's activities.

Vedānta proposes realization of Brahman as the definite goal of life, which becomes a reality with the knowledge of Brahman. It is experiential knowledge and not an intellectual one. The truth of our being is within ourselves. So instead of looking outside we must control our senses, and look within. Meditation thus is the real path of Self-realization.

The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* speaks of hearing, reflection and meditation as the three successive steps in reaching the Self (2.4.5). Hearing about the truth of Brahman should be from an expert teacher. Next comes reflection on the truth of the sacred scriptures which provides rational basis for the truth of Brahman. When the spiritual seeker has arrived at the intellectual conviction of the spiritual truth he has to experience it in deep meditation. The old impressions are eradicated, the mind is purified from all its impurities, and there is a merging of conviction into direct intuition of the Absolute. The three steps have an ascending degree of value. Shankara says in the *Viveka-cudāmani* (364): "It is a hundred times better to reflect on the truth of Brahman than merely to hear about it from the scriptures. And meditation is a hundred thousand times better than reflection." Nididhyāsana being the direct approach to Brahman can be practised by a very qualified seeker. Dhyāna is an uninterrupted flow of thought on a deity. Nididhyāsana is the apprehen-

sion of the Self as Brahman. Dhyāna is meditation on it. Often these terms are interchangeably used because concentration is the common factor. Upāsanā is also meditation, but with the help of a symbol.

The Upanishads are the source scriptures, they are records of the spiritual experiences of the seers. They extol meditation as the main method of realization. Meditation has to be done in the cave of the heart, says the *Katha Upanishad* (3.1). The rishis meditated repeatedly and Brahman was revealed to them. As a result all their doubts disappeared and the knots of the heart were loosened (*Mundaka Upanishad* 3.1.8, 2.2.8).

It is difficult to know Brahman. Following the path of meditation the wise man knows it, says the *Katha Upanishad* (2.12). Moreover, it says that one cannot know Brahman if one does not meditate (2.24) and Brahman is revealed in the heart through the insight obtained in meditation (3.12). The *Mundaka Upanishad* (3.1.8) says that the truth of Brahman is not grasped by the senses, but by meditation. Absorbed in meditation, the seeker sees Brahman within himself and all things in it, says the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* (4.4.23). Meditation has been compared to the uninterrupted flow of oil from one vessel to another (cf. Ramanuja in *Sri Bhāshya* 1.1.1).

The Vedānta and Yoga systems share much with regard to meditation, though there is difference in their goal; in the one case it is complete separation from the Spirit, whereas in the other it is total fusion with the Self. Vedānta, however, accepts the eightfold practical course of Yoga.

The forms of meditation correspond to the forms of God and so there are innumerable types of meditation. The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* (2.4.5; 4.5.6) says that

the Self has to be made the object of meditation. The *Chāndogya Upanishad* (7.6.1) speaks of worship and meditation as Brahman. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (3.10) tells of various aspects of God to meditate upon, e.g. greatness, mind, adoration, etc. According to the Upanishads Brahman can be both personal and impersonal, with attributes and without attributes, with form and without form. There are different types of meditation on the Absolute and also on Isvara, the supreme God, the inner controller and the incarnations of God. The Upanishads repeatedly teach that knowledge of Brahman is achieved through neti, neti, not this, not this. It escapes all definition, all description. So all meditation on the impersonal, one without a second, will have to be on the approximations like the infinite sky, the vast space, the unending ocean, or the vast meadow. Thinking of the different characteristics of Brahman like existence, knowledge and bliss is prescribed. Meditation on God with form, however, is very common. Deities and avatāras are often prescribed for meditation. Japa, repetition of the divine name, and upāsanā, meditative and ritualistic worship, are very common. The mystical symbol Om has been extolled in various Upanishads. Meditation on it along with its repetition is often prescribed. It is the sacred seed word. Several Upanishads say that Om is Brahman. Meditation on the elaborate description of forms of deities is also recommended. This keeps the mind in a field of thought. Meditation done on various doctrines or ideas is often discursive. In the path of devotion the loving meditation on the chosen ideal is specially stressed. Loving meditation is a sublimation of the emotional life of man. Various relationships with God are assumed to make the feeling intense.

Devotees look upon God as mother, father and the like. Regarding impersonal meditation Sri Ramakrishna speaks of the individual self as a fish in the ocean of Brahman, or a pot immersed in the ocean, or a bird flying through the infinite sky of Brahman. Meditation on the identity of the individual self with the supreme Self indicated by *Tattvamasi* is often done. In this meditation on "That thou art" there is no experience of a person as in loving meditation. There is only the experience of oneness.

Āchārya Shankara in his *Viveka-cudāmani* (254–263) prescribes various meditations on "That thou art", which are more discursive in nature.

> Brahman has neither name nor form; it transcends merit and demerit; it is beyond time, space and the objects of sense-experience. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon that truth. It is supreme. It is beyond the expression of speech; but it is known by the eye of pure illumination. It is pure, absolute consciousness, the eternal reality. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth.
>
> It is untouched by those six waves—hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, decay and death—which sweep the ocean of worldliness. He who seeks union with it must meditate upon it within the shrine of the heart. It is beyond the grasp of the senses. The intellect cannot understand it. It is out of the reach of thought. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth.
>
> It is the ground upon which this manifold universe, the creation of ignorance, appears to rest. It is its own support. It is neither the gross

nor the subtle universe. It is invisible. It is beyond comparison. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth.

It is free from birth, growth, change, decline, sickness and death. It is eternal. It is the cause of the evolution of the universe, its preservation and its dissolution. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth.

It is that one Reality which appears to our ignorance as a manifold universe of names and forms and changes. Like the gold of which many ornaments are made, it remains in itself unchanged. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth.

There is nothing beyond it. It is greater than the greatest. It is the innermost self, the ceaseless joy within us. It is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. It is endless, eternal. Such is Brahman, and "That art Thou". Meditate upon this truth.

INDEX

Absolute, see Brahman
Adbhutananda, Swami 22
Adhyatma Ramayana 84–86, 88–90
Advaita 9, 22, 65, 71, 85, 89, 99, 101, 122, 166
Agama(s) 46, 159
Agastya, Sage 86
Allah 21
Alwars 27–28
Angarisa 9, 11
Atman 62, 79–80, 87, 103–4
Augustine, Saint 81

Bhagavata 2, 24–25, 61, 64, 84, 86, 141, 147, 153, 166
Bhakti (see Devotion) 90, 112–13, 117, 126–27, 135, 137–38, 145–47, 152, 154, 156; aids to 114–15, 154; definitions of 105, 113, 126, 143–44; kinds of 127, 135, 145; nine means of 84–86, 153; six obstacles to 154
Bhakti Yoga 1, 53, 59, 80, 90, 104, 106, 114, 116, 169
Bible 2, 20, 57
Brahman 6, 8–10, 22, 45, 47, 59, 62, 64–65, 80, 99, 100–1, 103–6, 111, 124, 129, 132–34, 137–38, 140–42, 151, 160, 166–71; Nirguna 99–100, 152, 169; Saguna 99–100, 169
Brahmananda, Swami 4, 6, 21
Brahma-sutras 100, 122, 131, 141, 159–60
Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 47, 104, 166, 168
Buddha 60, 62, 75, 110
Buddhism 5–6, 19, 37, 110
Buddhist 4, 62

Carlyle 45, 58
Chaitanya, Sri 23–24, 129; and spiritual disciplines 150–57
Chandogya Upanishad 1, 14–15, 169
Charles Hodge 81
Chosen Deity 4, 30, 44, 53, 64, 66, 88–89, 104, 128, 148
Christ, Jesus 2, 20, 60, 75, 91
Christianity 6, 39, 56–58, 81
Concentration 2–3, 5–7, 88–89, 168
Confucius 58

Devotee(s) 5–6, 21, 24–25, 28, 41, 65–66, 68–70, 74, 76, 79–80, 85, 89, 93–94, 96, 117, 143, 148, 151, 156, 170; grades of 26; qualifications of 23
Devotion 5, 15, 18, 23, 25, 59, 82, 85–86, 104–5, 125, 143–44, 150; forms of 24
Dharma 98, 162
dharana 2–3, 88
dhyana 2, 12, 88, 137, 166–68
Discrimination 85, 103, 89–90, 102–3, 114, 136
Divine Name 8, 11, 13, 18–20, 23–25, 154; glory of 23–29; repetition of 5, 25, 41, 169

Ego 37, 41, 69, 73–74, 77, 90, 93, 101; suppression of 39, 72;

types of 78–79

Faith 10, 13, 15, 25, 33, 35–37, 39, 41, 54–55, 61, 66, 77, 88–89, 91–93, 96, 98, 135–36, 144, 152, 155

Gayatri 10, 18
Girish Chandra Ghosh 79
Gita, Bhagavad 2, 13, 37, 40, 65, 69, 71, 87, 89, 114, 118, 166
God 4, 6, 13, 33, 35, 37–38, 42, 56, 60, 62, 66, 71, 74, 81, 89, 94–95, 98, 111, 124, 132, 141; as Mother 29–30, 92–93, 170; grace of 95–96, 123, 134–37, 144, 146–47, 152, 164; name of 15, 18, 21–22, 25–26, 84, 96; personal 99, 104, 106; -realization 6–8, 18, 30; surrender to 79, 81, 112, 115, 147; vision(s) of 30, 111–12, 117, 120, 134
Grace 22, 31, 37–38, 75, 81, 95, 136–38, 142, 144, 147, 165; divine 68, 74, 76, 125
Guru 73, 87–89, 100, 105, 118, 134, 136–37

Hindu(s) 11, 18–19, 38
Hinduism 5–6, 18–19, 22, 30, 38, 63
Holy company 85–86, 136–37, 145
Holy Mother (see Sarada Devi) 5; and simple faith 91–98
Humility, see self-negation

Idolatry 57–60, 63
Image-worship 56–64, 66–67
Ishta, see Chosen Deity
Ishwara 61–62, 87, 99–100, 104–5, 112, 136, 169
Islam 6, 39, 56–57

Japa 4, 8–15, 18–19, 21, 75, 89, 93–96, 169; ritualistic 11; types of 11–12; various methods of 13
Jesus see Christ
Jiva 100, 104–5, 124, 131–32, 136, 138, 141–42, 151, 157
Jnana 80, 103, 112, 137, 142
Jnana Yoga 1, 53, 79–80, 82, 90, 104, 106, 112, 152, 162
Jnani 6, 80, 133
Judaism 6, 39

Karma 33, 42, 68, 70–72, 75, 95–96, 117; prarabdha 71
Karma Yoga 1, 53, 82, 104, 106
Kane, P. V. 62–63
Katha Upanishad 166, 168
Koran 57
Krishna, Sri 2, 13, 25, 37, 84, 86–87, 109, 134–36, 138, 142–45, 147, 150–57, 166

Madhva, Acharya; and spiritual disciplines 122–29
Mahabharata 9, 24
Mahanirvana Tantra 2, 14
Mahavakya(s) 8, 18, 103
Mantra(s) 10–15, 19, 85, 89
Manu Samhita 10
Master (see Ramakrishna, Sri) 92, 94
Maya 79, 87, 143
Meditation 1–3, 7, 40, 75, 88, 93, 103, 113, 126, 138, 144, 163, 166–170; benefits of 6–7; types of 3–6, 163, 169
Modi, J. J. 63
Mohammed 58
Mountford, W. 81

Mukti 86, 113, 143, 145, 163–64; factors which lead to 125–26
Mundaka Upanishad 168

Nag Mahashay 79
Narayana 62, 111–12, 116, 122, 125, 129, 161, 163
Nididhyasana 125–26, 167
Nimbarka, Acharya; and spiritual disciplines 131–38

Om 6, 13, 22, 169

Patanjali 2, 8, 13, 15, 87–88, 104
Prapatti (see self-surrender) 112, 114–16, 135, 137
Pratyahara 2–3, 88
Prayer(s) 20, 31, 104; definition of 33; efficacy of 36–42; function of 36; necessity of 34–35; types of 40–41
Prema 84–85, 138, 154–57
Puranas 3, 24–25, 27

Rajas 25, 78
Raja Yoga 1–3, 7, 82, 112
Rama, Sri 14, 84, 86; on nine steps to devotion 85
Rama Bose, Dr. 137, 161
Ramanuja 132, 159, 168; and spiritual disciplines 111–120
Ramayana 24, 84, 86
Ramakrishna, Sri 4, 8, 30, 33–36, 44, 50, 56, 69, 71, 73–74, 76, 78, 82, 90, 95, 156, 170; on japa 18
Religion(s) 1, 35, 37, 40, 43–44, 51, 53–58, 61, 82, 91–94, 96–99, 110, 119; purpose of 109
Rig Veda 30
Ritual(s) 43–55, 86, 89, 105; definition of 44; functions of 49–50; -istic Karma 48; limitations of 50–51; and spirituality 54–55; types of 46
Rudolph Otto 35
Rupa Goswami 24, 146, 153–54

Sadhana(s) 9, 12, 24, 85, 87–90, 99–101, 106, 112–14, 119, 125, 129, 134–37, 143, 145–46, 148, 151, 153, 155, 162; six treasures of 89
Sadhana chatushtaya 89, 102–3
Sadhu-sanga, see holy company
Salvation 128, 134–37, 162–64
Samadhi 87–88, 103–4, 106; types of 104
Sarada Devi 18, 94
Sattwa 78, 87, 142
Scriptures 1, 97; spiritual disciplines in the 166–71
self; effort 68, 70–75; expansion 76–83; negation 76–83, 92–93, 135, 138; surrender 68, 79, 81, 115, 117–19, 135, 147, 164
Self (see Atman, Soul) 2–3, 6–7, 42, 65, 72, 74, 77, 79–81, 100–4, 168–70; individual 80, 170; -realization 167
Shaktas 29, 44
Shaivite 28–29
Shankara, Sri 8, 13, 30, 47, 65, 71, 74, 96, 110, 167, 170; and spiritual disciplines 99–106
Sharanagati, see prapatti
Shiva 12, 28, 30, 104, 160–65; sanctity of His name 29
Shivananda, Swami 5
Shrikantha, Acharya; and spiritual disciplines 159–65
Soul 38, 40, 59, 87, 124, 129, 132–34, 138, 146–47, 161; Individual

111, 123–25, 136, 141, 150, 161; Supreme 123
Spirit 56, 60–61, 66, 90, 109, 126, 168
Spiritual; aspirant 3, 64, 70, 73, 82, 106, 119–20, 129, 138; discipline(s) 9, 15, 18, 70, 75, 85, 89, 94, 129, 138; illumination 19; practice(s) 15, 19, 66, 74, 81, 94, 144; progress 61, 68, 74, 87, 127; realization 1, 68, 74, 110; teachers (see Guru) 3, 16, 28, 88, 99
Study (see Swadhyaya) 85–88, 125–27
Sufism 21
Swadhyaya 10, 87
Swamiji, see Vivekananda, Swami

Taittiriya Upanishad 101, 169
Tamas 25, 78, 80
Tantras 53; on japa 11–14
Thomas a Kempis 81
Truth 39–40, 85, 89, 91, 106, 111, 166

Udupi 122, 128–29
Upanishad(s) 18, 48, 63, 65, 87, 99, 101, 116, 126, 166, 168–69
Upasanas 42, 63, 65, 100, 104, 126, 134, 151, 164, 168–69; types of 104, 163

Vaidhi Bhakti 84, 90, 146, 152
Vaishnava(s) 8, 11, 18–19, 23–24, 26, 41
Vaishnavism 27, 61, 129, 140; Bengal 23, 150, 154; Sad 122, 128; Sri 27, 122
Vallabha, Acharya; and spiritual disciplines 140–48
Valmiki 14
Vedanta 6, 39, 47–48, 53, 56, 78, 89, 99, 103, 131, 164, 167–68; philosophy 3, 122
Vedas 2, 10, 22, 24, 29, 47, 85, 88, 100, 123, 127, 140, 159
Vedic 14, 41, 61, 63, 110, 146; karma 48; -ritualism 47–48, 110; sacrifices 63–64
Vishistadvaita 111, 115, 122, 159
Vishishta-shivadvaita 159, 162, 164
Vishnu 25, 31, 61, 104–5, 131; worship of 128
Viveka-chudamani 106, 167, 170
Vivekananda, Swami 1–2, 39, 43, 49, 59–60, 76–77, 80, 82–83, 88, 97, 112, 114–15

Will 38, 40–41, 72; free 68, 73, 75
William James 33, 80
Woodroof, John, Sir 44, 49

Yoga(s) 37, 41, 53, 79, 104, 152, 168; eightfold path of 88, 125
Yogachudamani Upanishad 9
Yogi(s) 2–3, 5–6, 11, 80, 89
Yajur Veda 29

Zoroastrianism 58

BOOKS ON SPIRITUAL LIFE

	Rs.
Mind and Its Control	12
Strive to Attain God	25
Common Sense about Yoga	10
Spiritual Practice	12
Religion and Its Practice	13
Towards the Goal Supreme	30
For Seekers of God	32
Will Power and Its Development	5
Meditation, Ecstasy and Illumination	30
The Soul's Journey to Its Destiny	32
Meditation and Its Methods	11
Powers of the Mind	4
A Call to the Eternal	40

Price Rs. 22

$ 4.95
ISBN 8185301859
50495
9 788185 301853